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The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the English language. It is argued that the study of the history of the English language is not only a matter of academic interest, but also a matter of practical importance. The study of the history of the English language can help us to understand the development of the English language and the influence of other languages on it. It can also help us to understand the social and cultural context in which the English language has developed. The second part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the English language in the context of the study of the English language. It is argued that the study of the history of the English language is an essential part of the study of the English language. The study of the history of the English language can help us to understand the development of the English language and the influence of other languages on it. It can also help us to understand the social and cultural context in which the English language has developed. The third part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the English language in the context of the study of the English language. It is argued that the study of the history of the English language is an essential part of the study of the English language. The study of the history of the English language can help us to understand the development of the English language and the influence of other languages on it. It can also help us to understand the social and cultural context in which the English language has developed.



**THE VIVIAN ROMANCE.**

**VOL. I.**



# THE VIVIAN ROMANCE.

BY

MORTIMER COLLINS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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**RICHARD DODDRIDGE BLACKMORE.**

**POET AND GARDENER.**





# THE VIVIAN ROMANCE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### NUMBER ONE.

“L'Hymen, dit-on, craint les petits cousins.”

VALENTINE VIVIAN was a noticeable man—as Wordsworth said of Coleridge—yet the first thing one noticed about him was his dress. He was sitting, when I desire to introduce him to the reader, in a peculiarly easy lounging chair, placed in a wide window overlooking a superb sweep of scenery whose beauty was intensified by a summer sunset. Long slopes of perfect lawn were bounded by a ha-ha ;

and there was a noble park beyond, studded with great oak trees, populous with deer ; and a river, one of England's many Avons, bounded the view. Broadoak Avon is a great estate, as dwellers in the midland counties know full well ; and the Squire of Broad-oak Avon well deserves his princely heritage. But I have not yet come to the Squire.

Now, as to Valentine Vivian's dress. His coat was of violet velvet ; his waistcoat of a brocaded silk, with gold buttons, and in each button a diamond ; his trowsers of a lavender cloth. Round his neck he wore a cravat of wondrous lace, and ruffles of the same hid the smallest and whitest hand in the world. Then how perfect a Wellington boot of polished leather concealed his Lilliputian foot ! Vivian was altogether Lilliputian. Never, probably, did so ambitious and energetic a spirit find so small a human habitation.

Vivian had long bright yellow hair, curling over his shoulders, with a silken Vandyck beard to match, and the softest of golden moustaches. His eyes were large, as blue as steel, as keen as a Toledo rapier. You could not see his upper lip, for the golden growth above it; but it was of perfect form, like Apollo's bow; while the lower lip, ruddy and voluptuous, made one think of Sir John Suckling.

Valentine Vivian had a companion—a huge mastiff, twice his own weight at least, who bore the name of Thor. Vivian, as the sunset grew deeper in the west, and tinged with saffron and purple the winding Avon, was lazily smoking a cigarette, and glancing at a volume of Alfred de Musset's poems. I think the book was open at one of the Madrid lyrics, wherein was melodiously passionate mention of a certain Andalusian Marquise.

Presently the door opened, and Lady Eva Redfern entered.

Lady Eva, sole daughter of the Marquis of Alvescott, and wife of Rupert Redfern, of Broad Oak Avon, was a perfect creature of the Artemis type, lithe and lissom, fluent and flexile. Tall and swift and slender, there was no touch of Brodingnag in her build ; she was the very reflex of the inviolate Huntress. Brown eyes had she, and brown hair of divine softness, and a bust of voluptuous curve, and long light delicate hands, with a rosy tinge in the flesh of them.

She was twenty-five, Lady Eva. Rupert Redfern, the Squire, was about forty-five. I suppose I must describe the Squire.

He was a man about six feet three inches high, with a portentous stoop in gigantic shoulders. He was huge, every way. Mentally or physically, there was nothing baby-



ish about Rupert Redfern. He had taken a double first at Oxford, rather easily. He had pulled stroke in the University boat, and pulled such a stroke that the University did not soon forget it. And now he managed his great estates in a massive magnificent fashion, making the farmers his friends, and the farm-labourers his abject worshippers. He was generous, was the Squire. He would not have misery among his dependants. And, giant though he was, being as tender as a woman, he was quite at home in the cottages of the poor.

“Love had he found in huts where poor men lie.”

’Tis not a bad place to find love, if, like Squire Redfern, you set about it in the right way.

Valentine Vivian was ten years older than his beautiful cousin Eva, though he certainly did not appear so. The Marquis of Alvescott and Sir Alured Vivian married

sisters ; and, as Lady Vivian died early, and the baronet did not want to be bored by his boy, Valentine was quite at home at Alvescott Manor. Well, cousinship is very nice. When Eva was fifteen, she was a prodigious little romp. She was the perfect fulfilment of Robert Brough's *Neighbour Nelly*.

“ She is tall, and growing taller,  
She is vigorous of limb ;  
You should see her playing cricket  
With her little brother Jim.”

But, as there was no brother Jim in her case, she was wont to victimize her cousin Valentine. The Marquis was a devotee of the turf ; the Marchioness was a confirmed invalid ; and Lady Eva's governess, Miss Lister, was her most obedient slave. The said governess, when first she came to Alvescott, had endeavoured to enforce regularity and propriety : but nothing would have effected this short of actual corporal punish-

ment; and Lady Eva could much more easily have inflicted this on the governess than the governess on her. So Miss Lister prudently accepted the situation, taught her pupil when her pupil was inclined to learn, and obeyed orders excellently. Lady Eva, however, was not idle. There were times when she chose to learn, and things which she liked to learn; and, as she had free access to her father's splendid library, she got a fair sort of irregular education.

Eva at fifteen or sixteen was a romp; at seventeen or eighteen she had developed into a flirt. People who remembered her the most reckless of young hoydens, were amazed at her sudden acquirement of dignity and stateliness. Putting her into long dresses seemed immediately to have made a woman of her. There was only one person who would not accept the change—her cousin Valentine. He laughed at her airs



and ~~was~~ ~~and~~ ~~married~~ ~~on~~ ~~seeing~~ ~~her~~ ~~as~~ ~~just~~ ~~the~~ ~~more~~ ~~child~~ ~~she~~ ~~was~~ ~~a~~ ~~year~~ ~~or~~ ~~two~~ ~~younger~~. It was very provoking, but Valentine was ~~unconquerable~~. He would not ~~relinquish~~ any privilege of cousinship; he would treat her as if she were a little girl. He never condescended to flirt with her, and certainly never made love to her. This last he might have done with impunity, perhaps with success, for the Marchioness would have been delighted to see the cousin married; while the Marquis thought a ~~good~~ deal more about a bay filly that he had named after his daughter, than about the young lady herself. But Valentine was not a marrying man. He liked to be on easy terms with his cousin, but had not the remotest idea of making serious love to her. He teased her abominably.

By-and-by the time came for Lady Eva to be a bride. She had plenty of wooers,

be sure ; and when she chose Squire Redfern from among them, a good many of the insolent young sprigs of fashion who had followed her professed to be perfectly shocked. The Squire was forty, at least—double her age ; he was immensely rich, which showed how mercenary she was. He was a man who liked to live on his estates, and look after his people ; so she vanished from society, and went to live a quiet life down at Broadoak Avon.

Five years had passed since their marriage. There were no children. Vivian, during that period, had seen but little of his cousin : he had been abroad for long intervals, he said ; at any rate, he was very seldom seen in England, but had been encountered both in Paris and Baden. He had, however, been heard of in England. He had fought a duel in the Bois de Boulogne, thereby earning a half-column of Whitehurst. He

had written a couple of volumes of verse—one at Venice, the other at Rome. The Venetian brochure was a witty wicked story in octave rhyme—the rhyme of Pulci and Byron: while at Rome he had gone in for passionate lyrics and lurid invectives. Both books were good enough as works of art: were the product, indeed, of a volatile versatile vivacious mind; and were deservedly maltreated by the sensible and sagacious critics of London. Those critics, as we all have excellent reason for knowing, are grave and serious men, who sternly disapprove of immoralities and levities. They object (and who shall gainsay them?) to the whimsical fantasies of an effervescent mind. This is a world for statistics and didactics; a world in which he is a god who can make money, and he is a demi-god who can write a money article. And it is clearly wicked to tolerate persons who come into such a world to

waste their own and other people's money, to draw caricatures and write exciting lyrics.

But "dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" And, because thou art solemn and stupid, preferring small beer to all other liquids, shall there henceforth be no effervescence of Champagne? I think otherwise. I have an enormous reverence for the tribe of statisticians; but I confess, when Vivian's thin volume of amorous octaves came home from Venice, I put aside a most interesting article by Mr. Newmarch, and read it right through before I went to bed. I am half ashamed to acknowledge such frivolity.

This was the sort of thing :

" In a right Protestant mood, extremely bitter,  
I watched the purple proud procession swerving  
Through the white street, and marked the priestly glitter.  
And then I saw one girl, with bosom curving

Unanimously, and graciously agree, that  
 For Pagan days than ours. That Edward being  
 Such seasonable collaborer in war, I hope  
 He very quickly would convert the Pope."

Steele and Low in sense this is well known.  
 After reading a number of hundred such stanzas,  
 imagine the gusto wherewith I returned  
 to Newmarket!

Returning to England, Vivian found himself  
 made very welcome by his cousin's husband.  
 He came to Brookbank for a week,  
 and stayed for months. The Squire, in fact,  
 would not let him go away. So, although  
 he had rooms in town, he was seldom to be  
 met with except just in the height of the  
 season. He wasted his time in rhyming and  
 singing (he had a divine tenor voice), sketch-  
 ing and smoking; but, by way of letting off  
 a little superfluous steam, he was in the habit  
 of taking long lonely rides every day. A  
 perfect horseman, and the lightest of light  
 weights, he enjoyed long hours in the sad-

dle more than anything else in the world.

"Lazy as usual, Val," said his cousin, when she entered. "Won't you come and walk with me? I am going to visit some old women."

"Poor child! I hope somebody will come and visit you when you are an old woman. Where's the Squire?"

"He went over to Riverdale, to attend a meeting of magistrates. There have been a series of burglaries lately, and people are getting quite frightened."

"To be sure. I remember. I wish they'd try this place. It would be a nice break in one's *ennui*."

"Well, see if you can get rid of a little of your *ennui* by walking with me to the village. It will do you good."

"Will it? I don't know. However, I'll come if I may smoke. I won't carry tracts and beef-tea, please to observe. You

are not going very far, of course ; it is getting too late."

"I have just one or two old folks that I want to see before dinner. There is plenty of time. Rupert won't be back till the last moment, I expect."

So the cousins started for the village, on whose outskirts Lady Eva had a couple of her pet pensioners to relieve. They arrived at a comfortable red-brick cottage in a pleasant garden. Just across the road there was a stile entering a path through Squire Redfern's woods—beautiful beech-woods, populous with pheasants. On this stile Vivian sat and smoked his cigarette, while Lady Eva paid her philogynic visit.

As he sat there, indolent of mood, a shrill sharp whistle sounded through the copse. It was a whistle unique of its kind—not the sort of music which bucolic boys utter with unskilled lips. It caused Vivian

to spring over the stile and look curiously into the depths of the wood. He perceived, advancing along one of the paths, a slight agile man, in a blue dress with brass buttons, bearing all the marks of able seamanship. There was instant recognition.

“Well, Mark, what is it?” he asked.

“You are badly wanted, sir. The men are making fools of themselves. Could you come to-night?”

“Will two o’clock do?” he asked.

“Very well indeed. I will tell them you are coming.”

Although this brisk sailor vanished as rapidly as he appeared, Lady Eva Redfern noticed him as she left the cottage. She asked her cousin what he was.

“Only a beggar,” he replied. “There are always plenty of them on the road.

“I hope he wasn’t a poacher,” she said.

“Rupert detests poachers.”



"He was dressed like a sailor," said Vivian. "I believe your swell poachers prefer to dress like dignitaries of the Church."

They walked home together through the summer twilight. The Squire's mail phaeton had just reached the door as they arrived. When they sat down to dinner, Mr. Redfern was full of the magistrates' conference, at which he had been present. Riverdale and the whole county were consternated. For weeks past there had been the most daring burglaries and highway robberies. A skilful gang were at work, evidently. Plate and jewelry had been stolen from half a dozen great houses. There was not a farmer in the county who dared ride home alone from market. Mr. Severne, the Chief Constable of Riverdale, who had never been baffled before, was utterly baffled now.

"I never heard of so perfect an organiza-

tion," said the Squire. "They seem to know exactly when and exactly where to make their burglarious attacks. They ransacked the plate-chest at Chilham House, going straight in and straight out, as if the butler had shown them the way. They stopped poor Henderson, the lawyer, on the loneliest part of his road home, with two hundred sovereigns in gold in his valise. I don't believe the old boy had had so much gold about him for years. They are doing the thing so cleverly that the police are perfectly puzzled and perplexed."

"I sometimes think it would be rather fun to be a detective," said Vivian.

"We have a wonderfully clever fellow in Severne," said the Squire. "He's a gentleman, and a Cambridge man, and seems to have taken to the business from mere liking. He'll catch these fellows in time, I feel certain."

“Let us hope so,” replied Valentine. “But I am weary of these thieves. Let us have some coffee and music. If the scoundrels would attack us here, I should feel disposed to forgive them.”

So there followed one of the pleasant indolent evenings which are the delight of English country life. Lady Eva gave her husband and cousin their coffee; and then there was an interval of Mendelssohn and Rossini, Vivian’s glorious tenor doing wondrous work; and then they sat awhile, chatting over the great excitement of the day—the mysterious systematic robberies.

“Your stories are alarming,” said Vivian to the Squire, drinking his final draught of iced seltzer. “I shall load my revolver to-night.”

Which indeed he did. Arriving in his chamber, he took from its case a very elegant little six-shooter, and charged it care-

fully. Then he quietly divested himself of the elegant attire in which we have seen him, and put on a business-like riding-dress—top-boots, buckskin breeches, and a close-fitting coat. Then he sat awhile, smoking a big regalia, and meditating.

By-and-by, having finished his cigar, he rose from his lounging-chair, took a big gulp of brandy and water, and descended stealthily through the corridors, which were dim and silent. He had keys for all doors that he desired to pass. He made his way to the stables, and reached a stall wherein stood a coal-black mare, nearly thorough-bred. She whinnied at his approach. He saddled her, led her out, locked the stable door behind him, and rode away rapidly.

There was a bright full moon. Vivian rode for the most part across open moorland soft to the mare's tread, fragrant to the rider's nostril. About three hours' travel

brought him to a large town, a quaint old-fashioned town when you reached the centre of it. He rode through back streets till he came to a narrow alley, at whose entrance a man was waiting. Vivian dismounted, left his horse in this man's care without saying a word, and walked down the alley.

Half-way down a door opened the moment he reached it. He entered, and was in the small parlour, apparently, of a public-house. It was a room about fifteen feet square, and there were in it about a dozen of the most truculent ruffians you ever saw, smoking the most villanous tobacco you ever smelt.

As Vivian entered the room, every man rose to receive him.

## CHAPTER II.


## NUMBER TWO.

“ In town a maid da zee muore life,  
 An’ I don’t underriate her,  
 But ten to oone the sprackest wife  
 ’S a farmer’s woldest daeter.”

HALF a mile from Squire Redfern’s park gates, on a beautiful reach of the Avon, is Broadoak Mill Farm. It is as quaint a place as you would wish to see. The farmhouse and the mill, both ancient timbered buildings of red brick, are on opposite sides of the river, which is crossed by a narrow wooden bridge. Old Ralph Ashow is farmer and miller also—a warm man, no doubt, with an account at Riverdale Bank, and, it is commonly believed, a hoard of guineas

in his strong-box at home. But his choicest possession, in his own opinion and in that of the young farmers of the vicinage, is his daughter Mary, a charming little coquette of eighteen.

She is sitting now under the great mulberry-tree in the old-fashioned garden, where bloom the dear old homely flowers which modern horticulturists despise. Pigeons are flying, a many-coloured flock, through the sunlit air, and there is a drowsy hum of bees from the long row of straw hives beneath the southern wall. Half in shadow and half in shine, Mary Ashow is knitting under the mulberry-tree—a *petite* figure, yet plump and rounded, with blond hair and watchet eyes, and a rosy laughing face. She wears a light print dress, but her white arms are bare; her sole ornament is a maiden-blush rose at her bosom. I wish I could sketch her under that grand old tree,



with eyes that try to look demure under their long lashes, and lips that will betray those eyes by pouting into an incipient laugh. Mary was as gay as a bird, and as busy as a bee—a model farmer's daughter. Every now and then she would burst into a snatch of song . . . not echoes of opera or quasi-comic chanson from the casino, but fanciful fragments of old ballads, the work of forgotten singers in distant simple days. "Silly sooth" are such rhymes as these, no doubt.

"Lady Mary Ann was a flower in the dew,  
Sweet was its smell and bonny was its hue,  
And the longer it blossomed the sweeter it grew,  
For the lily in the bud will be bonny yet."

But when you hear them wedded to simple melodies, and sung by a sweet soft voice under a mulberry-tree, they have a magic of their own.

So at least thought John Grainger, a distant relation of Farmer Ashow's, who was living with him, to learn the art and mys-



tery of farming. John was only a few months older than Mary, and so of course was as bashful as possible in her presence. He was a stalwart fellow from Westmoreland, as strong as a bull and a great deal uglier. His hideous honest face, with eyes hidden under heavy eyebrows, and a nose that turned up as if there were Irish blood in him, and a mouth some sizes too large, made one think of an ogre. He had the best temper and appetite and the roughest head of hair in the world. He was a studious youth, with a great liking for mathematics, botany, and chymistry. When he came of age he would have money enough to take a good-sized farm; and his friends thought he would be likely to succeed in Australia. He had been disposed to agree with them, before he came to live at Broad-oak Mill Farm, and to see Mary Ashow every day.

It was afternoon, and at four o'clock precisely the farmer and John Grainger would come to tea. Mary saw the time by the turret clock over the mill-door, and sprang from her seat, and went away singing to make the necessary preparations. A pleasant summer parlour opened on the garden, and here the meal was set: bright silver and curious old china appeared on the table; the tea was fragrant; the butter and cream delicious; the virgin honey full of floral flavour. The young mistress of the farm did her ministrations deftly, fascinating poor John Grainger to such an extent that he was always making some absurd mistake—swallowing his tea at its hottest, or committing some other awkwardness. The farmer was a macilent man, who looked as if he had been in a good many storms, and had only grown the harder for the encounter. People were wont to say that old

Ashow was as tough as ash. He certainly looked so.


"They've not caught these housebreakers yet, I'm told," he remarked to his daughter. "We shall have them here some night, Mary. Mind you lock yourself up carefully."

"I'm not worth the trouble of carrying away," she said. "They're more likely to look for your money, father."

"I don't think they'll find very much," replied the old gentleman. "I should not like them to get at the silver, though; it has been so long in the family."

"It is always carefully locked up," said Mary.

"Ay, but they're so cunning. They got at the plate-chest at Chilham, you know. I shall be glad when the rascals are caught, for they are giving a great deal of trouble. The police must be mighty stupid, or they would have had them long ago."



“Mr. Severne’s a clever man,” said John Grainger. “He was a first-rate mathematician at college.”

“Mathematics won’t catch thieves, in my opinion,” oracularly observed the farmer. “Unless your wise Chief Constable could cast a nativity, as the astrologers do. But I suppose he’s above all that sort of thing.”


Farmer Ashow was always very hard on Grainger about his favourite studies. The youngster was really a good mathematician for a self-taught student; moreover, he invested his spare money in chymical apparatus; and from his solitary room there sometimes came sounds of explosion or odours of noxious gas. Half in earnest, and half in jest, the farmer was wont to laugh at these vagaries of his.

“You’ll never calculate the weather by algebra,” the old man would say, “nor manure your fields with those nasty-smelling

gases. And you'll either addle your brains with figures, or blow yourself to pieces with some of your combustibles."

The second prediction was nearly fulfilled once or twice. Grainger was ambitious, and had a fancy for blowing hydrogen soap-bubbles, and making chloride of nitrogen, and so forth. Consequently there was sometimes a great smash of retort and crucible, and our chymical adventurer got burnt fingers and scorched eyebrows—nothing worse as yet. And, as he good-humouredly was wont to remark, nothing of that sort could spoil his beauty.

On the present occasion he was warm in defence of Chief Constable Severne, whom he greatly admired. What he knew of him was simply this. There was a Mechanics' Institute at Riverdale. Grainger, in pursuit of his mathematical studies, had gone thither to pore over certain books of reference.



They were old-fashioned books, as a matter of course ; the libraries of such institutions are usually ill-chosen. Grainger had just reached that period at the entry to mathematics when the Calculus has to be attempted ; he could find no book that treated the subject otherwise than as *Fluxions*. He asked the librarian's guidance, but that person was wholly uninstructed. He was, however, good-natured ; so he offered to inquire of Mr. Severne, who came there to look at the papers, and who bore a mathematical reputation. The Chief Constable, interested in the young student, lent him some books, and did what was even of more value—give him a few hints how to use them. The man who strives to teach himself any subject has difficulties unimaginable to more fortunate students ; and this is especially the case with mathematics.

John Grainger was amazed to find how

his perceptions disengaged when he came in contact with a master of the science. He had spent hours in attempting to discover the meaning of what the books said to teach him. Mr. Severne set the matter clear in a minute. No wonder that the young farmer strongly maintained his friend's cause.

"Well," said Farmer Ashw., as they rose from tea, "when Mr. Severne catches the thieves I'll believe in him. And now I'm going to smoke a pipe. Come down to the river with me, Mary."

This was a regular custom of the summer afternoon. A pleasant path beside the Avon bordered the garden, and led towards some beautiful beech coppice. And up and down this the farmer loved to saunter in the sunshine, smoking his long pipe, and listening to Mary's gossip. The scene was enjoyable. The great mill-wheel moved slowly through the water; the lasher sparkled in the sun-

shine; trout leaped at the fluttering fly; now and then a kingfisher zig-zagged from bank to bank, or a tall heron rose slowly in the air; and always stately swans floated double, "swan and shadow," upon the poetic stream.

I think this was the choicest time of Farmer Ashow's summer days. In winter he liked the late evening, the settle and the great wood fire, and Mary's bird-like voice singing for him her favourite old ballads. But in summer he loved the Avon marge—and to loiter with his daughter along the leafy path where years before he had wooed his wife.




## CHAPTER III.

## A BOUDOIR POUR BOUDER.

“ An oriel window looks  
 O'er elms alive with rooks,  
                   While afar,  
 Past glades where browse the deer,  
 There shines a silver mere,  
                   Like a star.”

AT eleven on the morning after Vivian's night ride, he lounged down to breakfast at Broadoak, dressed point-device, and looking as fresh as paint. The Squire had breakfasted long before, and was out looking after his affairs. Lady Eva, however, had but just arrived, being like the lady (was it Millamant ?) in Congreve's play, who loved *semmels de matin*.



“Well, child,” said Vivian, giving Eva a cousinly kiss on the forehead, “how are you this morning? I, to say the truth, am thirsty. With your august permission, I’ll tell Lawrence to produce some hock and seltzer.

‘A pleasure worthy Xerxes, the great king.’

Every well-educated young lady knows of the passage.”

The butler served the effervescent liquid, and Vivian felt refreshed.

“Now for breakfast. Why, Eva, you look as fresh this morning as an Asian myrtle, which the Hamadryads have watered. Who would think you were an old married woman?”

“Don’t be tiresome, Val. Have some breakfast.”

“That will I. Pshaw! a heap of letters. Duns, *Cugina*, as sure as fate! Since the

Reform Bill, English tradesmen have become a perfect nuisance."

Vivian did not open his letters, but proceeded to eat his breakfast, showing an excellent good appetite. When he had finished, he carelessly thrust his correspondence into his coat-pocket, lighted a cigarette, and said to his cousin—

"Now, little girl, let us go and have a stroll."

Wide windows opened to a terrace. Lady Eva took from a couch a broad-leafed straw hat, and they passed into the bright summer air. Full of perfume was the air, from myriads of fragrant flowers that made islands of colour in the emerald lawns; full also of music from the unwearying throats of multitudinous birds that haunted the full-foliated trees.

"You ought to have a son and heir to enjoy this jolly place, Eva," he said, after a

few puffs of his cigarette. "It's entailed, of course?"

"I suppose so," she replied; "but I don't care. Rupert is very happy, and so am I."

"Rupert would like a boy, depend on it. I dare say the old place will have to go to some vile cad whom he despises. Well, it can't be helped. You'll be a charming widow, without encumbrances, and with plenty of money."

"You are in a wicked mood this morning, Valentine. I am tired of you. Good-bye."

Therewith she ran off along the terrace, and disappeared into the house.

"Poor little Eva!" he soliloquized, "she'd give her ears for a boy. I suppose I may as well look at these confounded letters."

He sat on a stone seat on the terrace, and looked through these documents. From tradesmen, several; from the *deminonde*

one or two; from a London friend, some social gossip; and one brief anonymous scrawl with the Riverdale postmark:—

“*Sir,*

“*You are known. Be careful.*

“*A Well-Wisher.*”

“Queer—very,” said Vivian to himself.

“I must think about this.”

Meanwhile, Lady Eva had reached her boudoir, locked the door, and thrown herself into an easy fauteuil. It was a charming room—a perfect nest for so pretty a bird. When Squire Redfern prepared to bring home his beautiful bride, for whom he had that strong steadfast love unfelt save by men of ripe age, he lavished upon her all that his wealth could procure. That boudoir must have cost a fabulous sum of money. It was filled with reminiscences of

“The glory that was Greece,

And the grandeur that was Rome.”

The Squire, having a fine taste and an inexhaustible purse, made the great house of Broadoak Avon look young again when Lady Eva came home; but he concentrated all his energies on this unique boudoir, and the result was perfection. The room had been added to the house by himself, in his bachelor days, with the idea that he would use it as a sanctum; but the Squire's life became so active, that he found no need for it, and it remained without an occupant. It was an octagon, approached by a corridor, and connected with the house at such an angle that two of its four windows commanded the long terraces of the two principal fronts, while the other two had exquisite views of their own. One of these looked through a wondrous silvan vista to the river Avon, beyond which rose a steep hill, crowned with a picturesque clump of pine, elm, ash, and birch. Be-

neath the other lay long slopes of lawn, park-land populous with deer beyond, and a wide reach of the river, which looked in the distance like a lake.

The beauty of the scenery without was well matched by the internal decorations. Three superb frescoes by three of our most famous painters occupied the spaces between those windows. The Squire, a lover of the classics, had chosen for himself the subjects. Whoso was fortunate enough to enter this chamber beheld right opposite him the palace of Menelaus, blazing with torch-light, while a misty moon rose above Eurotas, and queenly Helen passed stealthily through a postern gate to where Paris waited beside a chariot with chafing steeds. What a night it was! Upon Eurotas lay the moonlight, and music whispered from the wind-swept reeds on the river-bank; while flushed Atrides sat late at the ban-

quet in his lighted halls, and drank deep healths to Priam and his sons.

And on the left was Dionysus, as depicted in the Homeric hymn—

“ Bacchus, son of Semele,  
Sat on a cliff by the wide wild sea ;  
He was yet a merry boy,  
Gazing over the deep with joy—  
Dark his tresses, dark his eyes,  
His chlamys azure as the skies.”

The rosy young god lay lazily upon the long lush grass, and lustrous ivy and soft tendrils of the vine sprang by his indolent hand and languid foot, and strove to grow into a wreath about his dusky tresses. But on the beach below a swift shallop had run up, and evil-visaged Tyrrhene pirates clomb carefully towards the summit of the cliff, concealing themselves beneath the heavy fringes of purple-starred clematis. Little did they guess the coming terror in central abysses of the sea.

And on the right was slender-ankled



Persephoneia, playing in the wide meadow with the deep-bosomed Oceanides, plucking the myriad blooms of rose and crocus, violet, gladiolus, hyacinth, narcissus, miraculously produced to ensnare her. They burst beneath her fairy feet; they rose to meet her eager hands; the fragrance filled the concave ether. Then suddenly there was a chasm in the wide Nysian fields, and forth sprang Aïdoneus in his golden chariot drawn by immortal steeds, and the sky darkened at his stern aspect as if there were a thunderstorm, and the divine daughter of Demeter was rapt from the sight of her terror-stricken companions. The painter had caught that very moment: there was the wide, soft emerald meadow, half in the sunlight of noon, half in baleful eclipse; the daughters of Oceanus, pale and amazed, dropped their flowers upon the turf, and slender-waisted Persephoneia, powerless in

her captor's mighty arm, looked with dilating eyes toward the dark steep subterranean road which the coal-black horses panted to descend. An icy wind from that mysterious road seemed to drive back her long dishevelled tresses. Far in the unfathomable depth shone like a star the palace of the god.

But of all the other exquisite adornment of Lady Eva's boudoir it were impossible to speak. The young lady herself, at the moment when we have followed her thither, had no eye for the dainty trifles which on all sides surrounded her. She was simply bored, and angry with herself for being bored. The case was simple. When she married Rupert Redfern, she supposed that she loved him, and expected to be quite happy with him. Amid all her flirtations, she had been untouched herself; the blood ran calmly in her veins, though her beauty and

grace were causing the ruddy fluid to rush like a mountain-torrent through other channels ; and finding in Squire Redfern a man evidently superior to his rivals in everything manly, and possessing moreover a great estate, she married him without hesitation. But he was no Romeo, and certainly she was no Juliet.

When the Squire took her down into the country, she fully expected to be happy enough. She liked rural occupation ; and, though not given to the distribution of tracts, was fond of looking after the welfare of the poor. What she did not anticipate was her husband's absorption in his own pursuits ; he was his own steward, was an active magistrate, was Chairman of Quarter Sessions, looked after county business, parish business, his own business, and was at the same time carefully attentive to all political movements. Once he had been member for the

county, and his wife heartily wished he was so still—for at any rate there would be the season in London.

Few women have the gift of making themselves happy independently. How far this is natural to the sex, and how far it is derived from education, it is impossible to say. Enthusiastic advocates of female rights maintain that men have made women what they are ; that if they should ever get a fair chance they would be at least equal to men. Lady Eva had, however, no desire for such equality ; what she preferred was the superiority which she actually possessed, the irresistible power of fascination.

*Τί οὖν δίδωσι ; κάλλος·*

Eva was formed to be the centre of a pleasant social circle ; and when, in the autumn, Broadoak Avon was full of visitors, she thoroughly enjoyed herself, and caused the enjoyment of others. Her presence

seemed to have a magical influence.

But, when the great house was left to herself and her husband, Lady Eva was intensely bored. Her cousin's company rather annoyed her than otherwise, though she was really fond of him ; for he would treat her with a careless familiarity, as if she were still the mere hoyden that she had been when they were first thrown together. Now this, to a lady who had plenty of natural dignity, was really too bad. And Eva perplexed herself a good deal in attempting to conjecture why Vivian persisted in it. She could not guess.

I am disposed to think that he did it, half unconsciously perhaps, in self-defence. Lady Eva was a very attractive woman, and Vivian a man easy to attract. Indeed, if his poems from Italy represented anything at all like real experience, he must have surpassed all other erotic versifiers in the number of his

*amours*. Doubtless there was exaggeration ; at the same time, I fancy Vivian *was* somewhat addicted to running after every fresh face and figure that he met in his wandering. There are poets who differ from Pope, opining that the proper study of mankind is women—and of these was Vivian.

Now I take it that he was afraid of liking Eva too well, and so conjured up (*more poetico*, in his mind's eye) the romping child whom he had chased through the woods, and helped to climb trees, and brought home after many a long country ramble, with flushed face and tired feet and torn frock. This is my solution of the problem, but I do not think it occurred to Lady Eva. Would she have felt flattered if it had ?

As I have said, she was angry with herself for feeling bored. It was wrong, no doubt. And it was stupid. Mr. Disraeli remarks that no person can be bored who

is not a bore. Lord Stanley is of opinion that any one who likes can be happy, since happiness consists in hard work. Lady Eva, without consulting these great authorities, could perceive that in her position, with unlimited command of money, with ample resources of all kinds, it was neither morally nor intellectually to her credit that she was the victim of *ennui*. *Ennui* was unintelligible to Squire Redfern. Nothing and nobody bored him. He would welcome a bitter morning of east wind and sleet and slush just as readily as a divine sunrise that glorified the world and filled the hearts of lark and thrush with maddening desire of song. Old Mr. Bluebook, editor of a Scottish Review, and the finest master of prose in the English language, seemed to gratify the Squire just as much by his conversation as the choicest wit or most profound thinker of the day. It is a fortunate thing no doubt to be gifted

with this sort of endurance. Still, I hold that he who does not hate the east wind cannot know how sweet is the breath of the South—and that the man who can tolerate a Scottish statistician or metaphysician must be quite unable to enjoy colloquy with an English poet.

“Valentine is very annoying,” soliloquised Lady Eva. “I wish he would go away. And yet this place would be insufferably dull without him. What a foolish creature I am! Why cannot I contrive to be happy? There are millions of people leading happy lives who ought to be perfectly miserable if they did their duty; while I, who have got everything I want in the world, am tired of the monotonous way in which my life goes on. Breakfast—a stroll—luncheon—a ride or drive—dinner—music and chat—bed. This is the way I pass the time with utter regularity. It is as bad as



the treadmill. I wish something would happen. I suppose it is wasted, but I could almost wish those robbers they talk about would break into the house and give me some excitement."

In this foolish fashion Eva meditated, lounging in the easiest of chairs and looking out upon the sunlit terraces and gardens and glades. Had her namesake in Eden any such feeling of discontent before she tasted the mystic fruit? Did she find the glory of the grass, the freshness of the effluent air that played amid the mighty cedar branches, the music of morn and the silence of night, a trifle too monotonous? Did she pine to know what change might be if one passed the legionary angels, and the belt of forest beyond, and reached the outer world? Lady Eva, at any rate, in an Eden of her own, felt terribly, ineffably weary. There were times when she would willingly have

changed places with any poor peasant whom she saw at work.

However, being well aware that she was in a morbid state, she resolved to make an effort against it. She rang the bell, and announced her intention to ride. Her bright bay Arab mare, Ianthe, was brought round, and she started to the other side of the Avon, where the hills rose steep and somewhat wild, and their sides were clothed with beech and fir. There was a point at the summit, near a keeper's lodge, whence there was a view across the plain to Riverdale, which lay far down the Avon.

In this direction Lady Eva rode, trying to clear the cobwebs from her brain. It was a private road all the way. She crossed the Avon at the Mill Farm, and received a low curtsy from Mary Ashow. She was too pre-occupied to speak to the little girl, and rode on in her reverie, marvelling whe-

that Mary was happier than herself. A winding way led to the lodge, at whose garden-gate stood the keeper's wife, with a young child in her arms. She was Irish, this young woman, and her name was Eileen Maher. Her husband, Valentine Maher, an athletic Irishman whom the Squire had picked up in Galway, was a great favourite with his master. The baby in Eileen's arms was her second child: the first died of some infantile ailment, leaving its mother in so terrible a state of grief that it verged on madness.

Lady Eva dismounted, and gave her horse to the groom, and began to talk to Eileen. The baby, a hairless sturdy young mortal, with those eyes of miraculous blue that new-born children bring fresh from heaven, was stretching and laughing.

"Let me hold him, Eileen," said Lady Eva.

“Shure, your ladyship, he’ll be a throuble to ye.”

But Lady Eva took him in her arms, and as he looked at her with the portentous gravity of babyhood, felt a thrill through every nerve. This child had taught her what it was she pined for. Here was a young life, fresh from God’s hand, given to Eileen—such happiness was denied to her.

“Why am I childless?” she asked, bitterly, with big tears in her lustrous brown eyes.

## CHAPTER IV

A LASSY.

"~~Alas, alas, alas!~~"

**A**T this moment I perceive that a course of lectures to ladies on Size and Shape, as an introduction to Geometry, will be delivered, by permission of the Lord President of the Council on Education, in the lecture-room of the South Kensington Museum, by a gentleman who writes B. A. after his name, and is a fellow of Trin. Col. Cam.

Size and Shape! An introduction to geometry! Well, 'tis a mad world!

*There is a fellow of Trin. Coll. Cam.,  
And though odd it appear, yet sure I am  
That from Colney Hatch he did escape,  
Lecturing ladies on Size and Shape.*

How will our Bachelor deal with Size?  
Will he measure pupils? or even eyes?  
I suppose his course would end with haste  
If he tried with his arm a student's waist.

And the marvel of Shape—the sensuous swerve,  
Delicate dimple, maddening curve—  
Egad! they are things past Euclid's reach. . . .  
Let him go to school where he dares to teach.

The modern method is that a Bachelor of Arts shall stand up and lecture a crowd of ladies. Still, I expect there are a good many couples who adhere to the old method of Abélard and Heloise. Any way, John Grainger, who knew nothing about the ancient authorities in his favour of his own notion, connected tuition with love-making. He was a great student, as I have said, of three sciences—mathematics, chemistry, botany. As may be supposed, his knowledge of them was about commensurate with that which Donna Inez had of Greek. His mathematics were not altogether spurious: good luck had put him in the way of a Peacock's

at the *Académie* of Cambridge, which had taught him that letters and figures may carry ideas. Moreover he had made the acquaintance of a French schoolmaster named *Lucy*, a remarkably clever little fellow of the old school who taught geometry the only thing worth learning and could inscribe a regular polygon of seventeen sides in a circle. His botany and chemistry were more empirical. The former was adulterated with poetry, and the latter with experiment. Both sciences thus modified and mitigated are very nice for lady-pupils. They like to connect the rose with Waller, and the lesser celandine with Wordsworth. They like the minor classics of stamens and pistils, tetrandria and monogynia. They also like to see potassium catch fire on ice, or chlorate of potass and phosphorus produce subaqueous combustion when touched by nitric acid. The great ideas which un-

derlie both these sciences do not reach them—they like the fun and flirtation. When Cole, C. B., invented South Kensington, he was the feminine Londoner's greatest benefactor. There is no finer flirting-ground in the metropolis than the Department of Science and Art. And, as flirtation is both a science and an art, surely the department is most appropriately named.

John Grainger had taken holiday this summer afternoon, to give Mary Ashow a lesson in botany. The pretty little lass, in straw hat and light print dress, carrying a basket to contain her floral treasures, tripped gaily along the wood-paths; while her big companion stalked steadily beside her. Very pleasant and cool were the woods, with just a faint breath from the southwest rippling all their leaves and fluttering the flowers that grew about the roots of the



tree. They ascended to a terrace high above the river, which was only visible at intervals through the dense summer foliage. The broad broad leaves of the ~~last~~ autumn still carpeted the woods: but a multitude of many-coloured mosses mixed with them: and at the tree-roots big fungi grew in forms and hues indescribable.

About these last John Granger was very learned. They were good to eat, he assured his pretty pupil: they had the nitrogenous elements of meat in them: some of them tasted like real cucumbers, and others like ~~bad~~ ~~snake~~. Mary listened with grave attention, but expressed an opinion that she would much rather not try them.

But the great attraction of this particular ~~would~~ was that it contained some of the rarest orchises. You know the flowers—pretty freaks of nature in a whimsical mood, blossoms that look like insects resting a mo-

ment on a leaf. In search of these Mary's bright eyes wandered restlessly in all directions, and at last she suddenly exclaimed—

“Oh! John, there's a spider orchis, I believe.”


“*Ophrys arachites*,” said the young man learnedly—“a gynandrous plant.”

“Never mind,” interrupted Mary, petulantly. “But you *must* get me that one. It is such a beauty.”

Now this tall flower, bearing half-a-dozen blooms, which looked like so many spiders in good condition, grew some little way down over the brow of the steep slope. It was just beyond John Grainger's reach. Active as a deer, he let himself down by a bough of ground-ash, dug up the orchis with his pocket-knife, and threw it up to Miss Ashow. But then he found the chalky ground giving way under him, and the ash-root gradually loosening, so that he could


not possibly regain the path, but must slide down and make his way round. Telling Mary to meet him at the Cavern, he let go his hold, and by jumping and sliding reached the bottom of the slope. So they went along in parallel paths, Mary in the wood, and John Grainger on the river-bank, catching glimpses of each other at intervals.

The Cavern was a curious excavation in the rock, which tradition asserted to be an ancient haunt of robbers. It would only have held three or four robbers of anything like a reasonable size. Loopholes were cut in it, through which there were beautiful views up and down the Avon, and a seat was hewn in the solid rock. Evidently it was an ancient cutting; why hewn there it would be hard to say. Perhaps a hermit might have lived there in the old ascetic days; there would have been no room for him to lie down, unless he were a very



short anchorite indeed ; but he might have been of a sect that preferred to sleep standing. But the origin of the cave matters little. It was a good place to make the terminus of a walk. On a hot day the stone chamber was always cool, and there were pleasant prospects through its narrow apertures ; and the seat was so small, that two young folks like John Grainger and Mary Ashow, sitting down in it together, were in deliciously close juxtaposition.

However, on this occasion, Mary approached it alone, and, as she approached, she noticed the fragrance of a cigar. Instead of alarming her, as might have been supposed, it seemed to hasten her steps. She tripped down the narrow path, orchis in hand, which led to the cave, and was greeted on entering by no less a personage than Mr. Valentine Vivian, who was smoking a cigar, and admiring the scenery with



a somewhat patronising air. "Ah! Mistress Mary," he said, when he saw her, "what good fairy told you to come here to-day?"

And therewith he unhesitatingly kissed her pretty lips, to which she made no resistance. If poor simple John Grainger, far below by the river, had seen that osculation, how shocked he would have been! Often had he dreamed of those tempting lips, but never had he ventured to approach them.

"O, Mr. Vivian," she said, "who would have thought of meeting you here? I came out with poor John Grainger, but he slipped down the bank in getting me this beautiful orchis."

"An orchis!" said Vivian. "I accept the omen. And poor John is at the bottom of the hill, I suppose. Yes, I see him just turning up the zig-zag."

Having reconnoitred John Grainger, Vivian proceeded to make love to Mary in an easy off-hand way. The poor child, a farmer's daughter of eighteen, took his insolence for the gentlemanly style of doing things. I need not say that this was very far from being their first *rencontre*. Vivian had marked down the rustic beauty very soon after his arrival at Broadoak Avon. He was a student of character; he found out the old farmer at an early date, and made a complete conquest of him. Indeed Farmer Ashow, who was absolutely loyal to the Squire, of course believed in all the Squire's guests. But John Grainger hated Valentine—partly from a simple honest instinct, which taught him that there was something insincere about this superfine gentleman—partly, also, from the fact that Valentine treated him with superb indifference, scarcely appearing to notice his existence.

At that moment Vivian turned his eyes  
towards the cave-making with considerable  
curiosity. John Grainger would be here in  
ten minutes. He made the most of the  
time. But somehow, he did not take com-  
fort in the time. John climbed the slope mo-  
napping that he expected: and on approach-  
ing the cavern he also smelt the fragrant  
scent. He came forward quietly. Yes, there  
were voices, and Mary's one of them.

Should he listen? He knew it was  
wrong? The blood tingled right up to the  
tips of his great ears as he thought of it.  
Yet who could be with Mary in that solitar-  
place? When people doubt, they usually do  
the wrong thing.

John Grainger listened, and the result  
verified the old adage.

"So you don't care much about that oaf,"  
said Vivian.

"Why, he is a mere boy, and a ver-

stupid boy," said Mary. "How should I care for him? Poor John!"

"He is awfully fond of you," said Vivian. "You treat him very badly. I suppose he would break his neck to get you a flower."

All this and more John Grainger heard. What should he do? He felt inclined to take the impudent fellow by the throat, and hurl him down the slope into the river. But he was withheld from this outrage by two considerations—one that Vivian was much weaker than himself, the other that a brawl in Mary's presence was not to be thought of. He could not decide what he ought to do; so at last he fairly took flight, made his way up through the woods in a different direction from that which he had traversed with Mary, and, putting on the steam, tried to walk off his annoyance. Walking or riding rapidly, the brain works. Who was the



great orator that always made his speeches while riding across country? Your thoroughbred devours the ground—with like rapidity shall your eloquence destroy opposition. You fly over a big fence like a bird—similarly shall you pass over the head of your adversary.

John Grainger, doing nearly six miles an hour, soon walked off his first confusion and perplexity of feeling. Out of the wood, and on the open moorland, his mental atmosphere seemed to clear. He was an immature boy, you know, and his first feelings were anything but intelligible to himself. Now, he began to think consecutively. Did he love Mary Ashow? Not any longer, he thought. But he pitied her—and he despised Vivian. These two notions were quite clear to him. Mary was in the clutches of a scoundrel, and he would rescue her, if rescue was possible.

Such was the decision into which John Grainger walked himself.

Meanwhile Vivian, after lighting another cigar, walked out into the wood. He could see nothing of Grainger.

"Your lumpish adorer has vanished, Mary," he said. "I should have thought he was too big and heavy for that sort of business. Never mind; you and I will walk home together."

"What can have become of him?" said Mary. "I never knew him do anything of this kind before."

"He certainly doesn't look the sort of fellow to be eccentric. Never mind, my darling, it is all the better for you and me. We can stroll back leisurely. I did not expect to have so pleasant an afternoon."

Leisurely indeed was their stroll towards the Mill Farm. It was long past the hour of tea-drinking when they arrived—Mary

with a sweet flushed face. Vivian looked as cool as *Agave-scorpiones*. But as it happened the hour did not matter. Mr. Farmer Ashow had been called away in attendance on business, and had said word that he might not be home till late.

"Then you can give me a cup of tea, Mary, with some of that divine cream," said Vivian. "I think such tea as you make is more refreshing than *iced Champagne*."

So they had tea together: and after that they strolled about the place, and Mary Ashow showed Mr. Vivian some of the quaint nooks and angles in the old farmhouse and mill.

"There are such lots of curious closets in the old house," she said. "Father doesn't think he knows them all. There's a big closet, with a door in his room, and another door in mine, where I tell him he keeps all

his money. He never lets anybody see the inside of it."

"I must see your room, Mistress Mary," said Valentine. "Just one peep through the door, you know."

After some few feints, she consented; and Vivian had a glimpse of the little girl's chamber, old-fashioned and not elegant, but exquisitely clean and fragrant. And she showed him the big door of black oak which led to her father's mysterious closet.

Vivian walked home slowly, there being plenty of time to smoke and reflect before the first dinner-gong sounded. On his way he again encountered the sailor of the previous day. Not now dressed as a sailor—he wore a black suit and a white necktie and spectacles, and looked very much like a Dissenting minister. He brought Vivian some letters.

"Very good," said Vivian, after glancing



## CHAPTER V.

## A NIGHT ATTACK.

“Here laws are all inviolate.”

EVERYBODY remembers how Don Juan's sagacious reflections on the beatitude of this island were suddenly interrupted. If there were always a convenient footpad to stop people when they begin to utter sagacious reflexions, by putting a pistol to the reflector's ear, it would be a considerable blessing. And, O what a treat would it be if there were somebody to jerk a novel-writer's elbow when his invention fails him, and his pen goes off into prosy “padding,” and bring him back to his

~~REMEMBER WITH~~ VER IN IT BACK TO  
THE

FARMER ASHOW HAD HIS SLEEPER, and smoked his pipe and went to bed where he soon slept soundly. His was a huge well-furnished room with several closets, all neatly locked; and in his business, before saying his prayers which (being a devout man) he did with great regularity, was so assured that things were safe in these receptacles. Then he put his big bunch of keys under his pillow, and slumbered in full confidence. Was there not his ancient blunderbuss over his bed's head, and would not the old watch-dog in the yard give him ample warning? Certainly the blunderbuss had not been fired off for many a year; and Rover, a very fine mastiff in his time, had lost most of his teeth, and nearly forgotten how to bark; but these considerations did not occur to Farmer Ashow.

Mistress Mary, who slept in the next room to her father, did not compose herself very comfortably to rest this night. She was a good deal fluttered by the events of the afternoon. She had met Mr. Vivian before, and he had treated her with condescending familiarity; but on this occasion he had quite taken her by storm, and she could not help going over and over again all that he had said to her. His words were very pleasant indeed. She was a very foolish simple little girl, without a thought of wrong, and she looked with immense admiration upon this very fine gentleman, and unhesitatingly believed every word that he said. Honest John Grainger, huge and hideous, seemed an inferior animal in comparison with Mr. Vivian, who was all elegance and grace, yet seemed full of fire and spirit.

Though under the middle size, there was



nothing unmanly about Vivian ; and when you saw him on horseback, the most daring rider in the county, you recognised the fact that size is after all a secondary consideration.

The more Mary thought of him, lying sleepless, yet not unhappy, through the midnight hours, the more she loved him. He was like a hero of romance to her. She had never seen anybody like him, and made up her mind that he could not possibly have an equal among mortals.

John Grainger did not get any sleep at all. He was fiercely indignant. He thought Vivian an effeminate fop, and Mary a heartless little fool. He strode up and down his chamber in a towering rage. His room was on an upper floor, down a long corridor, so that the rest of the household were not liable to be disturbed by his chymical explosions and emissions of odour. He ex-

ploded this night more furiously and continuously than any of his gases.

It was about two o'clock, and John Grainger was still striding up and down, and Mary Ashow was just sinking into the pleasant visionary doze which precedes sound sleep, when there was a movement in Farmer Ashow's dark chamber. A man emerged cautiously from his concealment beneath the bed, and crept towards the pillow. The old gentleman was very fast asleep; his journey, and a good supper, and some hot spirits and water, had sent him to bed in a somnolent state. It was an easy business to take the keys from the pillow without waking him. The thief, a slight man, wearing a black mask, and carrying a dark lantern, secured the keys, opened the chamber door, locked it behind him, and then went quietly downstairs. Next he unfastened the house door, and standing on

the threshold, gave a low whistle. In moment he was joined by several other men, all masked like himself. The greyhound did not bark all this time, and the house lay at the mercy of the robbers.

There was a whispered consultation. Then the scoundrels stole silently upstairs. Farmer Ashow's room was entered, and the old gentleman skilfully bound and gagged before he was half awake. Every closet in its turn was investigated, but nothing of much value found, except in that which has already been described as having a door which communicated with Mary's room. Herein was an iron safe, the key of which the burglars could not find; so, after a cursory examination, they decided to take the safe with its contents, and a couple of them carried away downstairs.

There were then three men left behind, one of them the fellow who had been co

cealed in the house. They talked in whispers.

“Will he come?” asked one of them.

“He said he would.”

“What about the girl? Shall we venture it?”

“If he comes there’ll be an awful row. But let us try it. He can’t help it when it’s over.”

They were discussing the fate of poor little Mary Ashow. In another moment she was startled from her sleep, and saw three masked ruffians at her bedside. She gave a shrill shriek, and fainted. Nothing more did she remember, until the fresh air revived her, and she found herself travelling rapidly over the moor in some sort of open vehicle. In her terror, she swooned again; and when she next regained consciousness, she was lying in a very comfortable bedroom, and a kind-looking old woman sat by her bedside.

But we must return to the Farm. Mary's shrill shriek had been heard. John Grainger heard it, and came rushing and tumbling downstairs, and found the house-door wide open, and heard wheels retreating in the distance. In his haste, he had brought no light, though his candle was burning. Another who heard it was Valentine Vivian, who, we know, was in the habit of riding late at night. He spurred his mare, and reached the farm just as John Grainger, having found a candle, again reached the front door. Vivian, who was smoking, as usual, sprang from his horse, and said—

“What's the matter, Grainger?”

“I don't understand it,” said John, who was not frightened, but completely bewildered. “There have been robbers here.”

“But I heard a scream,” said Vivian. “Is Miss Mary safe?”

“I don't know,” said John.

Calling him a confounded fool, Vivian made his way upstairs. Mary's room-door was open, and the pretty bird was gone from her nest. Then he passed into Farmer Ashow's room, and cut the ropes which bound that unlucky old gentleman. By this time the whole household was aroused, and everybody was talking at once.

"Look here," said Vivian, "you are all wasting time. Grainger, send a fellow on horseback to the county police-station, and ride yourself into Riverdale, to Mr. Severne. You know him, don't you?"

"Yes," replied Grainger, still rather devoid of presence of mind.

"Rouse yourself, my good fellow," said Vivian. "If you don't care for the old gentleman's money, you do for your pretty sweetheart, I suppose. Think of her in the hands of those ruffians."

This last speech cut Grainger like the

lash of a whip, and drove away his stupid bewilderment. He obeyed orders at once. The messenger to the county police had not far to go, and some of those officials were soon upon the spot. John Grainger, however, had a long ride to Riverdale.

Let us follow him. He mounted the best horse in the farmer's stables; but John was a heavy weight even now, and the animal in question, though capable of travelling any distance, could not travel any distance rapidly. Hence was it that it was past daybreak when he reached the head-quarters of the Riverdale police. The active Chief Constable had just arrived. John Grainger, in as few words as possible, acquainted him with what had happened.

"The county police were sent for, of course," said Severne.

"Yes, at once."

"Well, they will do their best, no doubt

—but I fear that will be very little. The young lady and the big chest are somewhere in Riverdale, without a question.”

“It seems strange,” said John Grainger, “that a young lady can be carried away and concealed in such times as these. Surely you ought to be able to find her in a few hours, if she is in Riverdale.”

“I’ll try. This gang of scoundrels has been wonderfully lucky; but I mean to have them at last.”

“There is no time to be lost now,” said John, whose big frame was tremulous with anxiety. “You *must* rescue Miss Ashow.”

“Take good heart, my boy. Go and get some breakfast after your ride; then you’ll be fit to help us if we want you.”

“Very well,” said John. “I shall wait at the Maypole till I hear from you.”

Severne was naturally in a highly irritated condition of mind. Ordinary county rob-



James were in business at his : but in the present instance I was clear that the burglar and highwaymen who had scattered the county with their depredations were quartered in Riverdale. They had been at work for weeks, and yet he had not traced them. It was a frightful mistake in a man with whom calling thieves was a passion.

Now he set all his detective machinery at work. Plenty of suspected persons and places there were in the great town of Riverdale, and these had all been carefully watched since the depredations commenced ; but there had been nothing to connect them with the outrages which had alarmed the county. Clearly this was a new movement, an independent organization. Severne, with all his Cambridge acumen, was thoroughly perplexed.

Leaving the Chief Constable to do his utmost, and John Grainger to breakfast with

what appetite he may at the Maypole, let us return to Broadoak Avon. Vivian, having liberated Farmer Ashow, and seen the county police in possession of the premises, rode quietly home, soliloquising as he rode.

"Confound these fellows!" he said to himself. "I shall have to come down upon them pretty sharp. What's the best thing to do? The Squire will want to go to Riverdale. I'll go with him."

Squire Redfern was an early riser. Soon after five he was out on the lawn, and was surprised to see Vivian there already.

"Why, Valentine," he said, "what's the meaning of this?"

"Another robbery to-night, Redfern. I was taking one of my nocturnal rides, and heard a terrific shriek, and found they had broken into the Mill Farm, and carried off Ashow's money and his daughter."

“His daughter!” said the Squire in amazement. “Are you serious?”

“True, upon my life. It was her scream I heard. When I got down I found old Ashow tied and gagged, and that stupid fellow Grainger mooning about without the least idea of what to do. I sent for the county police, and made Grainger ride off to Severne, at Riverdale.”

“It’s a most extraordinary and audacious thing,” said the Squire. “I shall go over to Riverdale at once. Will you come?”

“You had better see Eva first, and ascertain if she would like to come also. A robbery so close will frighten her, perhaps. Meanwhile, suppose we go down to the farm.”

They found Mr. Ashow in a fierce state of indignation. He had never been known to swear with such fine fluency and fervor. He abused everybody, but especially the

police ; there was a big puffy pulpy superintendent in charge, and on him Mr. Ashow's wrath descended most fiercely.

"Feed up the police as if they were prize oxen, like that fellow Iremonger," said the enraged farmer, "and, of course, they're too big and too stupid to do their duty. They do nothing but eat and drink at the expense of the rates. We shall be obliged to become our own police. If I'd been keeping watch last night, some of those fellows would have found out their mistake."

"I'm going to drive over to Riverdale this morning," said the Squire. "Will you come with us, Ashow? We shall be very likely to hear something of your daughter there. Come up to Broadoak and have some breakfast, and by that time the carriage will be ready."

The farmer assented. On their return

they found Lady Eva, whose lady's-maid had brought her the news in an exaggerated form, ready to breakfast with them. The Squire, who was a famous whip, ordered out his favourite four-in-hand team, and off they started for the town, Eva on the box by her husband, and Vivian and the farmer behind them.

## CHAPTER VI.

## A SILVERSMITH'S SHOP.

"Bos, fur."

*Eton Latin Grammar.*

**T**IS odd how gentlemen of the Hebrew race, though Mr. Disraeli attempts to teach them that they ought to be proud of their origin, are in the habit of disguising the grand old names which belong to them. Surely Abraham is better than Braham, and Moses more euphonious than Moss. But the name of the great lawgiver, having been shortened to Moss by a nasal process, is often further corrupted to Boss. This was

the name over the largest silversmith's shop in Riverdale.

Boss was a garrulous little Jew of about forty, who cringed to his customers in the most abject way, and who sold his plate and jewelry at the highest obtainable prices. Of course he was prosperous. All the leading people of the county patronised him. Harry Mauleverer had taken to yachting, and all his race-cups were to be seen in Boss's window. His establishment stood in the Rope Walk, on the best side of the great open market-place of Riverdale.

To this shop came Vivian, soon after the party from Broadoak had arrived in the town. Mr. Boss was behind his counter.

"I want to speak to you, Boss," he said, and went with the jeweller into his private parlour. "You know what these scoundrels did last night?" said Vivian.

"They broke into a house, I hear. They

have brought away a big safe, which they don't know how to open," he said, with a grin.

"They have done worse than that. They have brought away a little girl with them, a farmer's daughter, about eighteen years old."

"The devil! What fools!"

"Yes, it is that big ruffian, Black Ned. He begins to think he can do just what he likes. I'll teach him a lesson this time."

"Don't do anything rash, Mr. Vivian," said the Jew.

"Rash!" he repeated, with a contemptuous laugh. "Come along. I suppose they are in their usual haunt."

Vivian and the Jew descended long flights of stone steps, till they came to an arched cellar cut in the sandy rock, and lighted throughout with gas. Riverdale is built on a sandy foundation, and abounds



in such cavernous excavations. This was a wine-cellar, well stocked with both casks and bottles. By-and-by they came to an iron gate, which, being unlocked, they passed into a second cellar. In one compartment of this a room was fitted up, and here they found a dozen fellows, some asleep, some smoking and drinking. Farmer Ashow's impracticable safe was in one corner of the room ; tough as its owner, it had resisted a whole heap of iron implements, which lay broken beside it.

"Now, Mark," said Vivian, sharply, addressing the man whom he had met in the Broadoak woods, "what is the meaning of this? Why do you let that big blockhead Barnett make such a fool of you?"

The said Barnett, otherwise Black Ned, lay forward with his head on the table, having evidently been drinking hard.

"I can't manage him, your honour. He

is always leading the other men into danger."

"I'll manage him. Is the girl safe?"

"She is in bed upstairs, with old Mother Wiley in charge of her."

"You took her away with scarcely any clothes, I know. Go at once and tell the old woman to find some sort of clothing that is fit for her, and then take her out when the street is quiet, and leave her in the market-place. The little girl does not know much of Riverdale, so she can easily manage so that she won't know where she is. See that done immediately, then come back here to me."

Mark went. Vivian sat down and lighted a cigar. Such of the men who were awake, eyed him very much as wild beasts eye their keeper.

Presently Mark returned.

"Is it done?"

"Yes, your honour. The old woman

slipped round the corner, and saw the girl talking to a policeman."

"Good. You have been to blame in this affair, Mark; but the real fault is with Barnett. Wake him up, some of you."

A couple of fellows shook him, and he stared stupidly at Vivian.

"Listen to me, my men. You all ought to know me by this time. I'm just as determined here as I was at sea. Perhaps you remember what came of Jack Randal. Now, if I didn't know Barnett to be only a fool, I'd shoot him at once, and you might dig his grave in the sand; but I'll give him one more chance. Mark, get the cat, and strap him down—he shall have three dozen."

Barnett, still stupefied with drink, did not seem to understand all this; but another fellow sprang up, with a big cudgel in his hand, and swore a frightful oath that nobody should touch Black Ned.

"Indeed," said Vivian. And, with prompt rapidity, he took a revolver from his pocket, and put a shot through the ruffian's right arm. "Now," he said, "look to your own affairs. Tie that blackguard up, Mark."

He was obeyed, and Barnett received three dozen lashes, as skilfully and sternly applied as if Mark had been a boatswain in the old days of fierce flogging.

"That will teach the fellow to leave the girls alone," said Vivian to the Jew, with a laugh. "He has wanted a lesson for some time."

Therewith they left the chamber, and found their way back to the upper air. Vivian came into the shop just as Squire Redfern and Lady Eva stopped at the door.

"Mary Ashow is found, Valentine!" exclaimed Lady Eva.

"But not the safe," said the Squire.

"And suppose I mentioned it to you?"  
 repeated Tessa.

"What is the chance of its going to the  
 old man?" "The chance will have the  
 probability exactly as strong after she was  
 taken away, and she would herself be dead,  
 and so the woman is scarce to her. She  
 was very much troubled, but it was in her  
 to not say anything. By-and-by the old  
 woman went away for a time: when she  
 returned she dressed Mary in clothes that  
 she had brought to her, and took her very  
 quickly downstairs and through some nar-  
 row streets into the market-place. There  
 she left her, and the child saw a policeman,  
 to whom she told her story."

"Can't she show the way to the place she  
 came from?" asked Tessa.

"No—she has never been without an ap-  
 prentice to sorrow. She was very much be-  
 wildered, naturally: and these affairs lead

ing to the market-place are all so very much alike. But Severne, who is awfully annoyed at being so completely foiled, declares he will find the place before sunset."

"Well done, Severne! Let us hope he'll succeed. Boss, here, tells me that the people of Riverdale are in a terrible state of panic dismay. They don't venture out at nights. Some of the leading tradesmen have a select club they call the Institution, and they have been actually frightened into giving up their meetings. The town is demoralized."

"The thieves will do some good," said the Squire, "if they make the Riverdale people go to bed at respectable hours. They keep up a great deal too late in general."

"Will Mr. Severne find the safe, I wonder?" said Lady Eva.

"Severne's too clever by half," replied

TIVOL. "Look here, just look at this—showing me a look of a hundred Eva. I'll wager it with you again a look of Redfern's best cigars. And your best cigarette doesn't find the side."

"You may risk that Eva," said the Squire. "Valentine will be sure to smoke the cigars, whether he wins them or not."

So the bet was made: and soon afterwards the party returned to Broadoak. Mary Ashby, by reason of her rather curious apparel, being an inside passenger. As to the farmer, he was completely incredulous as to there being the remotest possibility of recovering his property.

"It doesn't matter, Squire," said the tough old boy, with a sardonic grin. "They haven't ruined me—I shall be able to pay my rent. But I couldn't have got on without Mary."

## CHAPTER VII.

## ON A GREEK ISLAND.

"Pity he loved adventurous life's variety,  
He was so great a loss to good society."

HOW Valentine Vivian came, years before this story commenced, upon a small island in the *Ægean* Sea, need not be stated at length. Weary of the beaten tracks of European amusement, he hired at Marseilles a rakish half-decked craft, with a most villanous crew of mixed nationality, and steered straight for the Greek islands. One of the crew, an Englishman, named Mark Walsh, had been in days gone by a very reputable fellow, in the employ of



English yachtsmen, and from him Vivian learnt that it was the design of the exemplary gentleman whose craft he had hired, to take an early opportunity of murdering him and seizing his property.

Vivian was not the man to take this sort of thing calmly, so he planned with Walsh how to checkmate these fellows, and, thanks to his indomitable pluck and superior supply of fire-arms, the plan succeeded. They had run past Sicily at this time. Vivian fastened a couple of the ringleaders into the bottom of the boat, and held right on to one of the smallest of the Greek islets, north of Crete, where Walsh assured him there was safe anchorage, plenty of food, and no inhabitants. It was quite a gem of an island. On its southern shore was a beautiful land-locked harbour of calm deep water, accessible by one entrance only, and that entrance half-hidden by olives growing to the water's

edge, and trailing plants that had grown into an impenetrable fringe over the porphyry cliffs. Stairs cut in the rock led to a natural cavern, which human ingenuity had made perfectly habitable. There were the coolest of chambers, where one might sleep within pleasant sound of the washing waves. Moreover, there was a satisfactory stock of the wine of the country, in a cellar which Dionysus himself might have chosen for coolness and secresy. This, Vivian learnt from Walsh, had been there for some years, being the remainder stock of some piratical islanders who had fallen victims to the Turks.

Vivian's promptitude and courage had won the respect and admiration of Mark Walsh, who became his absolute slave. It was determined to remain in this quiet retreat for a while; there were plenty of goats on the island, and birds of many kinds, and wine enough to last till there

came another vintage—probably much longer. Vivian, having his recollections of the Odyssey, his visions of the days when Ariadne was a vintager, was delighted with his discovery. He called his crew together, and told them his intention, assuring them, in the plainest possible language, that they would have to obey him, if they valued their lives. He had the two leading scoundrels—captain and mate, they called themselves—tied up and soundly flogged, which bit of determined discipline struck terror into the rest.

Very luxuriously Vivian passed his time for some weeks, his gun always providing him with capital dinners. Besides, there was an ample supply of fish in the bay—such red mullet as were never seen in the mouth of the Arun were to be caught by hundreds. By-and-by, however, he got to

the end of his tobacco, and asked Mark what was to be done.

“Shall I take the cutter, with two or three hands, and see if I can buy some on one of the larger islands?”

“I think that’s the best plan,” replied Vivian. “And if you meet with anything fresh in the way of eating or drinking, bring it in, for a change.”

Walsh started on his expedition with great ardour, and was away a couple of days. The cutter did not return alone. With her came a long light boat, with a single lateen sail, such as are frequent in these island-sprinkled seas. Vivian descended to the shore to see what had happened. To his amazement, Walsh proceeded to help ashore a beautiful Greek girl, apparently about fifteen years old, with no apparel save a single short-sleeved saffron vest reaching just to her knees.

"What the devil does this mean, Mark?" he asked.

"Well, your honour, I suppose you'll blow me up, but I couldn't help it. I tried for tobacco at Santorin and Anaphi, but there was none to be got. Then we overhauled this craft; there were three Greeks on board and this little girl. They didn't want to have anything to say to us, but I saw there were provisions in the boat, so I boarded them. The cowards jumped into the sea, and swam off as if they were fish. So I considered their boat a fair prize; and I'm glad to say, your honour, there are two or three casks of prime Turkish tobacco, and a lot of other things, which I've not yet examined."

"But how about the girl?" asked Vivian.

"I think they stole her, your honour. Jack Randal talks a little Greek, and that's what he manages to make out. Anyhow,

she was delighted to get away from them and come with us."

All this time she had been standing in a perfect attitude, unconscious of her beauty, with a long arched foot, white as the marble beneath it. Her eyes, of a wondrous blue, like that of deep-sea water, were fixed on Vivian's face. Her hair, full of light and lustre, was knotted behind her shapely head, and fastened with a silver arrow. The thin vest of crocus silk revealed every curve of her ripening form. Vivian, perhaps for the first time in his life, was scarcely up to the situation.

"By all the gods of Greece!" he said to himself, "this is a pretty state of affairs! What am I to do with this nymph of the *Ægean*? Walsh, bring me some of your piratical tobacco, and a flask of the yellow wine, and I'll consider the difficult problem."

He stretched himself on a couch of rugs to smoke and think. The young Greek silently seated herself at his feet, and watched him gravely.

Of course the result of his deliberation was that she remained in the island. And, as his followers were thorough ruffians, and as he doubted that even Mark Walsh could scarcely be trusted with a pretty girl, he kept her carefully within his own private dwelling-place. And here be it noticed that, though Vivian was a fast man, and had seen adventure, he was not that scoundrel of the deepest dye who deems every woman a fair object of pursuit. He had a poetic reverence for this waif of the wave—this perfect creature who seemed a gift from Greece to him, inheritrix of all the beauty and delight which rings through musical Greek verse, and sumptuously shines in silent marble. 'Twas of her he wrote :

"Eros a boy! The poets Greek,  
 A very pleasant airy clique,  
 Might fancy so. We look oblique  
     At such a fancy.  
 'Twas some sweet girl with passionate heart  
 First taught the fairy fount to start—  
 First practised that delicious art,  
     Erotomancy."

Her name, he discovered, was Earine—  
 daughter of spring :

"Nomen cum violis rosisque natum."

Having a marvellous aptitude for languages, he soon recalled from the caverns of memory half-forgotten echoes of his Eton Greek, and contrived to conquer the softened consonants and narrowed vowels of the modern speech. He found that even quantity had changed with time, and that his little friend had heard of Homeros. He learnt that *τουφέκι* means a gun, and *πυρόκονις* gunpowder, and *ατμόπλοιοι* a steamer; and reflected that if wary Odysseus had possessed similar knowledge, he would have made a



fearful example of the Cyclops, and thought very little indeed of Scylla and Charybdis.

Further, he taught Earine English. She was an apt scholar, and soon made music of our guttural sibilant speech. And a very pleasant companion this child-woman became to him. She would wander with him over the hills when he went on his shooting-expeditions, and lie in the stern of his boat when he made a periplus of the island. To sit upon the brow of a hill forest-crowned, and look down upon that sapphire sea which was the earliest home of poetic beauty, was a complete delight: equally delightful the swift cruise upon its laughing waters, where the free foam far away might well be mistaken for the white forms of swimming nymphs. Vivian was entirely happy, and he and Earine might have lived this lotos-life for a far longer time, but for one incident.

For it happened that on the hottest of summer days they had been wandering over the hills. And upon Vivian came Apollo's anger: when he returned home his brain was stricken with confusion, and he lay down in a dark inner chamber, powerless and lethargic. Earine knew the meaning of this. She had seen others in like manner stricken down. Admitting none except Mark Walsh, she tended Vivian assiduously, and gradually his brain recovered strength, yet not without intervals of delirious phantasy, wherein he imagined himself back in England, in the beautiful home of his boyhood.

In time his intellect regained its power, yet was less clear and calm than heretofore. And, just as he seemed almost himself again, an incident which aroused his anger caused his relapse. For, about noontide, he was leaning over a kind of terrace-wall, leisurely

smoking, while Earine, with a pitcher on her head, descended the marble stair to a well of pure water which was hollowed in the rock. The girl tripped downward, singing. As she came to the well, one of Vivian's ruffian crew sprang suddenly upon her, and caught her in his muscular arms. Lithe as a serpent, she escaped his grasp, and, without a moment's hesitation, sprang into the sea, at least twenty feet below. The ruffian stared at her in amazement for a moment.

For only a moment. Then his soul was in the next world. Vivian, who had seen it all, snatched up a rifle that lay at hand, and a conical bullet went right through Jack Randal's brain. His corpse toppled heavily over into the water. And when Earine, dripping like Aphrodite, climbed the stairs again, she found her master lying insensible.

Again he recovered, yet not aright. There was some warp in the brain. He was seized with a strange passion for piracy. His light skiff struck terror into the navigators of these waters. There was no great gain by such depredations, for the small vessels which he seized were generally freighted with fruit—sometimes with oil and wine; but Vivian adhered to his vocation, careless of results, and just for the fun of pursuit and capture. He shed no blood all the while, neither did he seize any slaves.

This lasted a few months, during which time poor little Earine got no English lessons—received, indeed, slight notice from her lord. At home, Vivian was morose and silent; only when upon the sea, chasing some flying barque, did he seem to possess any spirit or energy. In time the Turkish authorities deemed it necessary to inquire into the acts of piracy which were reported

to them ; and receiving due warning hereof, Vivian determined to break up his establishment.

Not without regret. Life on an island in those magical seas—a lonely life, beyond the reach of the great worldly triumph—is a thing enjoyable. Early in the morning to see the rosy fingers of the Lady of Light withdrawing her eastern curtains, while every island of the archipelago, and every wave of that delicious sea laughed welcome—at noontide to watch the cloud-films perish in the hot zenith, while the zephyrs seemed to swoon upon the breathless water—at eventide to mark the royal sunset grow dim, while the cool breeze suddenly awoke the foam : such delights as these had become a part of Vivian's life. He had enjoyed the mountain rambles, the careless cruises, the luxury of coming home late to abundant dinners of fish and game and goats' flesh,

with amber Greek wine, alive with sparkling specks of vivid violet, and then the fragrant coffee and tobacco of Asia. However, the Turks would be upon him unless he fled into more civilized regions. So he acted with his customary promptitude.

Mark Walsh wanted him to disband his ruffianly followers, and leave them to their fate. He would not hear of it. A wild fancy had fixed upon him, and he determined to follow up his piracy in the Ægean by a course of highway robbery in England. Nothing could turn him from this delirious decision. He sent Mark forward with the rest of the gang: he himself took Earine into France, and left her at a convent at Rouen, to finish her education. Considering what the little Greek girl's education had been, I fancy the ladies of the establishment must have had some difficulty in knowing how to *finish* it.

Now, Mark Walsh was a Riverdale man. That town produces a large proportion of adventurers : it hath no equal in cricketers and prizefighters, and in Mark it had produced a singularly respectable pirate. Mark's early life had not been quite devoid of peculiarities which are deemed objectionable by the social majority ; and among his sworn brethren in juvenile rascality was a Jew called Boss, whom he remembered with a quite sentimental recollection. Walsh, with his ruffians in charge, made his way naturally to his native town, and took up his quarters in a small public-house, not too public in position. Then he took to vicambulation, and lo ! over the most magnificent shop in Riverdale—a shop brilliant with gold and silver plate, and blazing with superb gems—he perceived the name of Boss. Mark guessed at once that this was his old schoolfellow, and having knowledge of cer-

tain curious incidents of that Hebrew's boyhood, he recalled himself to his memory. Boss, who was doing a brilliant business of mixed honesty and dishonesty, partly as seller of plate and jewelry, partly as receiver of stolen goods, was a trifle amazed at first ; but when he heard that there was a gentleman of high position concerned in the affair, it at once occurred to him that he might make a good thing of this unexpected incident. The small public-house in which Walsh and his gang had taken up their quarters happened to be the Jew's property—a convenient house for the reception of stolen goods, with a subterranean way into Boss's cellar. Here there was at once a fortunate arrangement for headquarters. Walsh got his ruffians underground as soon as possible, and kept them there, well supplied with strong food and stronger liquors, except when they



were wanted for some wild expedition.

Valentine Vivian, living in apparent quietude at Broadoak Avon, directed these expeditions. In the curious madness which had taken possession of him, he really rejoiced in these absurd aberrations. Boss encouraged him ; he made marvellous profit at the moment, and he calculated that when the inevitable time of discovery arrived, he should be safe with such a tremendous "swell" concerned. Walsh, on the other hand, was anxious to put an end to the perilous enterprise. He was a thorough rascal, but he loved his master, and he was terribly afraid of what might happen. But both these men found that Vivian, with all his obvious intellectual irregularity, was too much for them. Boss had an impression that he might manage the captain of this extraordinary gang of robbers, but one glance of Vivian's eye was sufficient to

show him that of this there was no chance. Mark Walsh attempted to dissuade his master from his ridiculous follies, but Vivian turned upon him as savagely as a tiger-cat, and Mark never ventured to say another word to him on the subject.

Hence arose the amazing series of highway robberies and burglaries which carried terror through the Riverdale district. Vivian organised, Mark Walsh carried out his instructions, the Ægean ruffians did as they were ordered. But, as we have seen, they grew mutinous now and then, and acted on their own impulses, and received condign punishment.

The capture of Mary Ashow made a strong impression on Vivian's mind, and brought him almost back to his senses for the moment. Had there been anyone to give him some guidance, he might probably

have recovered himself. But Mark Walsh was afraid of him, and there was no other human being who guessed his condition.

## CHAPTER VIII.

PARSON, POLICEMAN, AND POET.

“Your money or your life.”

SQUIRE REDFERN, delighted with the recovery of Farmer Ashow's daughter Mary, gave a great dinner in honour thereof. He invited the farmer and his daughter, and of course a good many other tenants of his, to keep them company; he invited the Mayor of Riverdale and other dignitaries of the Corporation, and of course Chief-Constable Severne; and he invited a few country gentlemen of his own set to meet them. It was, as Vivian remarked, rather a menagerie than otherwise. But it

was not an unpleasant evening which they spent—indeed, it was on the whole rather original.

When the ladies had retired, and the male guests took seriously to their wine, there was a decided tendency to tell terrible tales of robbery in all its forms. Everybody was voluble and garrulous on the subject with the exception of Severne and Vivian, neither of whom said a word, though they were Past Masters in the arts which respectively they professed and practised. Old old stories were ventilated afresh : robbers under beds, robbers concealed in cupboards and up chimneys, had their turn. Dick Turpin and Jack Shepherd were honourably mentioned. The conversation took a fine picturesque turn, and by the time the short hours arrived it seemed to be generally considered that a dashing highwayman on a thorough-bred mare ought to be a perfectly happy

man, and to be grateful to Providence for the position which he felicitously occupied.

There was but one dissentient—Lionel Wray, parson of the parish. He told both Squire and farmer, in set terms, that their talk was lewd and lax; he moreover said, sternly, as if he were preaching a sermon, that, with the utmost horror of bloodshed, he would instantly shoot any man who ventured to attack him.

All this time a wild and desperate devil was fretting Vivian's mobile uncontrollable brain. He had sat quietly watching and listening. He liked to see the stolid faces of the country gentlemen and farmers moved a little by the idea of robbery. He liked even more to watch Mr. Severne, who sat with a slight smile upon amused lips, hearing the ridiculous stories gravely told by these queer old fogies.

By-and-by the Reverend Lionel Wray

rose from the table, setting a good cleric example, and started to ride homewards. He had been gone about a quarter of an hour when Vivian quietly left the table, saddled his favourite mare, and started in pursuit. He wanted to test the parson's boast.

It was a night of the full moon. As Lionel Wray trotted quietly homeward, he was suddenly encountered by a man on horseback, wearing a black mask. True to his system, he drew out a pistol, but the sharp shock of the loaded end of a riding-whip disabled his right arm, and he was at the highwayman's mercy in a moment. Quickly was he despoiled of his gold watch and a few loose sovereigns, and left to ride home in melancholy mood.

The whole affair did not take half an hour—within three quarters at the utmost Vivian was back in his seat at table. It is so customary in these days for a man to go

quietly out for fresh air and a cigar, that nobody noticed his movements. The night was late when the party broke up. Somewhat noisily they were grouped at the great gates of Broadoak Avon, while horses and carriages and traps were brought up, and each man lighted pipe or cigar before he started.

Even the quiet cool Chief Constable lighted a short pipe when he had mounted his strong steady cob. Having watched him off, Vivian went up to the drawing-room, and chaffed the Squire on his dinner party, and wished Lady Eva good night. Then he passed out upon the terrace, and made his way to where the Arab mare had been left after his last adventure. Instead of returning to the stables, he had brought her to a quiet corner in the grounds. He leaped into the saddle, and started at a hand gallop toward a point at which he



expected to intercept the Chief Constable.


He was right in his calculation. He had reined up the mare beneath a big oak tree, entirely in shadow, and she stood like a rock. Knowing that Severne was a stronger man than himself, likely to be at least as prompt, and very sure to be armed, he took quick aim at the head of the cob, and shot the unlucky animal. Severne came to the ground heavily; Vivian also leaped to the ground, and discovered that the Chief Constable was scarcely sensible. It took but a minute to get possession of his watch, purse, pocket-book, and pistols; which done, our amateur highwayman left him to his fate, and rode home at a gallop.

Imagine, if you can, the consternation of everybody in the town of Riverdale, and all through the county, when the news spread next morning of the highwayman's daring. The abduction of Mary Ashow had produced

immense amazement ; but the occurrence of two highway robberies in one night, and that the Chief Constable should be one of the victims, caused greater excitement still. The quidnuncs who frequent the Riverdale market-place of a morning, and exchange gossip while they choose their fish for dinner, were overflowing with the topic. The highwayman was a magnified mystery. He was more than six feet high, according to one authority, mounted on an enormous coal black horse, whose eyes were like balls of fire. He was invulnerable: the parson's bullet had gone through him without hurting him ; the Chief Constable had struck him with a heavy riding-whip, and produced not the slightest effect. He had the power of making himself invisible—he appeared from an empty space when he encountered Mr. Severne. Such were some of the wildest exaggerations of Riverdale gossip ; people

a trifle too sagacious to listen to these were the victims of other misstatements, scarcely less absurd.

Poor Severne, stunned by his fall, had taken some time to recover. When he did so, he found himself lying in the dusty road, with his good cob dead beside him. Very painfully and slowly did he make his way to Riverdale. When he entered the town, he went straight to his head-quarters, and made official record of his own misfortune. The news spread—soon inquisitive reporters arrived, with a view of obtaining intelligence for the second editions of their respective daily papers, whereof there are three in Riverdale. The small boys of the town were soon screaming at the top of their voices—“*Guardian!*    *Gazette!*    *Express!*    Second edition! Two highway robberies! The Chief Constable robbed and nearly murdered!” There was quite a panic in



the place. The shopkeepers in the Rope Walk stood at the doors of their shops, under the long row of massive columns, and let business go to Jericho. Pious folk, who were going to morning service at St. Chad's, turned aside to listen, and were too late for prayers. Excitement filled men's minds just as the great flood of summer sunshine filled the market-square—nobody could think of anything except the deeds of the mysterious highwayman.

Archdeacon Coningsby, that famous member of the Church Militant, came, after morning prayers, across the market-place to his favourite bookseller's. Clothed though he was in broad-brimmed head-gear, with knee-breeches and gaiters on his shapely legs, the Archdeacon looked more martial than half the officers in Her Majesty's service. At the aforesaid bookseller's, which, you are doubtless aware, is also the

office of that excellent Tory and High-Church journal, the *Riverdale Guardian*, he heard an accurate account of the transactions, and chuckled over the discomfiture of his reverend brother, Lionel Wray. He was mightily amused by the panic in Riverdale, and not greatly displeased by the ill-luck of poor Severne, whom, as a Cambridge man turned constable, this Oxford dignitary somewhat despised.

Then there was a special meeting of the Watch Committee, the Mayor, a Conservative grocer named Skinner, in the chair. The florid and pugnacious Cox, leader of the Radicals in the Town Council, attacked the Mayor for having dined with "a 'aughty harrystocrat," and moved a vote of censure upon Severne for having done likewise, to the great neglect of his duty. There was a general row. The Mayor, who had dined remarkably well, supplementing a curious

mixture of Squire Redfern's wines with a copious share of several bowls of magnificent punch, was not in a mood to control the storm ; and so Cox, who had not dined in similar fashion, carried matters just as he pleased, and passed his ridiculous vote of censure by a majority of two. Severne was called in to hear the result.

"Gentlemen," he said very quietly, "although for the moment baffled by a most crafty organization, I do not consider that I deserve this censure. Under ordinary circumstances, I should resign at once, but I deem it my duty, in the first instance, to discover this nest of robbers. When that is done, which I hope will be very soon indeed, I will place my resignation in your hands."

Of course, as Riverdale this morning hummed through all its streets and shops with gossip, as a lime avenue hums with

bees when the blossom is sweetest, there had been plenty of such colloquy at Boss's emporium of jewelry. At about noon the wily Hebrew received an intimation that Mark Walsh wanted to see him, so he descended to the cellar, and they held private conference beyond all earshot.

"This is the captain's doing—eh, Mark?" said the Jew.

"Yes. He did it for fun. I had orders to meet him this morning, and he told me all about it. When he takes a thing of this sort into his head, nothing can stop him."

"It can't go on much longer," said Boss, gloomily.

Boss had two eyes that resolutely refused to act together, so that the expressions of his countenance were unlike those of all ordinary mortals.

"The captain got Severne's pocket-book," said Walsh, "and read his memorandums.

He is on our track. He had it put down that he suspected *you* in connexion with these robberies, and that inquiry must be made about the public-house called 'The Jolly Cricketers.' You see, this is serious."

"My God! I am ruined!" exclaimed the Jew. "What is to be done? Tell me, Mark Walsh. They will transport me if they find this out."

"Serve you right," said Walsh, with the utmost coolness. "However, the captain has thought of all this. I have orders to take the men away by rail to Portsmouth to-night. Before they go he advises you to make them block up the gate of communication between the cellars with sand, covering it completely on both sides. When they are out of the way, and all traces of them removed, you are pretty safe. You haven't any stolen property about."

"Everything is melted," said Boss. "But



there is the old farmer's safe, which the captain wouldn't have opened."

"That is to go back to the farm. I must move it away this evening, before the men start."

"What, does he mean to return it, after all the trouble it cost? He is mad!"

"Of course he is; not for returning it, but for taking it at all. Never mind, Boss, you haven't lost by him; and if you are careful, you won't. Now, there's no time to lose. I'll set the fellows at work in the cellar, if you like; you have the safe ready to put in the cart as soon as it is dusk."

It is not necessary to follow Mark Walsh and his ruffians to Portsmouth. They were glad enough to go: they had lived underground long enough, and longed for a change. Besides, they were all sailors by habit; and when Mark got them to Portsmouth, he found no difficulty in persuading

them to return to the sea again. There was a demand for able seamen. Mark saw them all safely on board some craft or other; and then, obeying his master's orders, he crossed to France, with a letter for Earine, who was at the Rouen convent, under the name of Miss Delisle.

Meanwhile there were fresh causes for amazement in the Riverdale neighbourhood. When Farmer Ashow came downstairs in the early morning, lo! there was his beloved safe just outside the door! He uttered an exclamation—everybody came to see—yes, it was the very safe, and its contents proved to be intact. Nor was this all. There came a parcel by rail to the Rev. Lionel Wray—it contained his watch, the loose sovereigns, and an apologetic note, requesting him to accept a diamond ring which was enclosed. There came also a railway parcel to Mr. Severne—it contained his

property, and Bank of England notes to the amount of fifty pounds, which he was asked to accept as some slight compensation for the loss of his horse. The writer in both cases professed his sorrow for having indulged in a foolish freak; and his regret seemed really sincere for the death of Mr. Severne's cob. The parcels came from Dover.

These singular incidents very much perplexed the public, and supplied material to the local newspapers for many imaginative leading articles.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE SEARCH AT "THE JOLLY CRICKETERS."

"A very quaint and questionable tavern,  
And underneath it a mysterious cavern."

VIVIAN, who knew everything, knew cryptography in its most intricate involutions. So, when he got hold of the Chief Constable's pocket-book, he addressed himself to decyphering certain mysterious memoranda which he saw therein. It is an elementary maxim that any enigma constructed by man can be solved by man; hieroglyphics and arrow-headed characters have been forced to yield their secret signification; and there seems no unsolved

puzzle left except the epitaph on Elia which, in all probability, is a mere hoax. The majority of mankind may be in the Tavis mine, but there is sure to be an Elipus somewhere. The amazing adventures which find lovers used to run in the second column of the *Times* have become more rare since some mischievous devil took the trouble to decipher and explain them for the benefit of the public.

It was made out the morning of Severne's return, however, and found among them some evidence that he was suspected. He was with us accordingly promptitude; Severe, that so, however, he could not be allowed to undertake search at the mine, and that he found nothing to sustain his case. For no such pretext could be made.

There was a meeting the highest respectability, a meeting of the Town Council, a

giver of excellent dinners, and a liberal contributor to the local charities. How could he venture, on mere suspicion, to hint at the possibility that the Jew was a receiver of stolen property?

Most of the municipal authorities of Riverdale were of the average type—men with whom it was useless for Severne to take counsel. There was, however, a single exception—Mr. Paget, the banker, an alderman and a magistrate, who, by education and connexion, was lifted above the ordinary provincial level. Severne resolved to ask his advice in confidence. Meanwhile, he made arrangements to watch the vicinity both of Boss's establishment and of the suspected public-house.

He found Mr. Paget in the bank-parlour, occupied, not in financial business, but in the translation of Homer into English blank verse. This had been for some years his

and were immense. Wherever he went he carried a small interleaved *libro*, and worked away with his pencil whenever he had a moment to spare. The old gentleman took off his spectacles, laid down his massive old-fashioned gold pencil-case on his velvet cushion, and listened patiently to Severine's statements.

"I am quite willing to believe that you may be right about Boss," he remarked, "but how are you to get at him? I have never thought there was anything queer about the fellow. But without some tangible evidence, you have no more right to suspect his establishment than mine."


"It is impossible, of course. The public-house I mentioned we can examine, for it has always been a bad character, and been a hotbed for thieves and rascals. But how is to find our track, unless we should

be fortunate enough to get at the truth through some accomplice."

"If your hypothesis is correct," said the old banker, "there must still be somebody behind Boss in the affair. Depend on it, that Hebrew would never return anything he once got hold of. It is difficult to believe in such things in the present time, but this last transaction looks like the freak of some hot-blooded youth. You don't know anybody of that kind in the neighbourhood, do you, Severne? It seems a sort of Gads-hill adventure—a frolic of the mad Prince and Poins."

A sudden idea flashed upon the Chief Constable's mind. After a moment's thought he said :

"There is Mr. Vivian, the gentleman staying at Broadoak Avon. It never occurred to me till this instant. The county patrol tell me he is often riding about the country






at all hours of the night. And he has been abroad a great deal, leading a reckless sort of life, they say. He was at the dinner, of course; and there was much wild talk of the way in which you should treat a highwayman. Perhaps he did this last trick for fun. But then, on the other hand, he seems to have come unexpectedly to Farmer Ashow's just after the robbery there, and to have done all he could to help us. He sent a messenger to me at once."

"He is a son of Sir Alured Vivian's," said the banker, "and there has been some hot blood in the family. His great-grandfather was a determined Jacobite, and narrowly escaped attainted. But I have always heard that this was far too clever a fellow to turn highwayman. And he certainly cannot want money."

Severne did not reply. He was trying to recall the incidents of the attack upon him-



self. He wanted to remember the appearance of his assailant. But the whole affair had been so rapid, that his memory was baffled.

"There may be a clue in this direction," he said at length. "I have been trying to trace the banknotes I received—there were ten five-pound notes—but it is almost impossible to find out anything about them. One or two have names endorsed upon them, and I have communicated with the endorsers."

"You must not expect much from that. Small notes are almost as untraceable as sovereigns. If a man writes his name on one, he will not remember to whom he paid it."

"Well, I must watch this young gentleman in future, as well as Mr. Boss. But I propose to examine *The Jolly Cricketers* public-house to-day. I shall take it among

several other houses of questionable character, so as not to make the landlord think we suspect him more than others."

Severne, accompanied by a couple of his best officers, made his tour of inspection. He found *The Jolly Cricketers* unusually quiet and respectable. The landlord was ostentatiously grumbling over his want of custom. Severne, having gone through the upper part of the house, required to see the cellars. They were reached by a staircase cut in the sandy rock; half-way down there was a circular chamber, with rough seats cut in the walls. In this place the Riverdale people had been in the habit of enjoying cock-fights, when that noble sport was prohibited by the law. I am told that the hotels and taverns of the town are full of such arrangements, and that cock-fighting in Riverdale was a fashionable sport long after it had been elsewhere forgotten.

The cellars, with a few beer casks in them, were dreary enough by the insufficient light which the police carried. Severne examined them as carefully as he could, but the light was insufficient. Anybody who has tried to conquer subterranean darkness with candles will be aware of the difficulty. The Chief Constable sent one of his men to the upper air with a message to the nearest chymist; he presently returned with a coil of magnesium wire. The splendid flame soon did good service. For it showed clearly that there had been recent digging in the sandy substance of the floor, and that the form of the cellar had undergone some alteration.

“I shall leave you here in charge, White,” Severne said to one of his men. “We’ll have some fellows in with spades, and see what all this means. Were you ever down here before?”

"No, sir; I think Cowan was."

"He shall come over, then. But what is that?"

The magnesium light had suddenly flashed upon something brilliant which lay on the cellar floor. Severne picked it up. It was a diamond shirt-stud of remarkably fine water.

"Don't say a word about this to anybody," he whispered. "It is more like a clue than anything we have found yet. Keep quiet, and we may make a good thing of this."

Feeling somewhat sanguine, Severne started to give his orders, determined to excavate a little, and see whether the cellar contained any more mysteries. But before returning to the cellar, he went hastily to the bank, and communicated his discovery to Mr. Paget.

"I can't help thinking," he said, "that


this is just the sort of stud Boss would be likely to wear. It is rather too fine for a real gentleman. You don't happen to have noticed anything of the sort when you have met him, I suppose, sir ?”

“Why, yes, it is rather singular that I have. I was at his shop a month or two ago, with my granddaughter, who bought a brooch, and she said to me afterwards that she had never seen such splendid diamond studs on such a frightfully dirty shirt.”

“Perhaps the young lady would remember them. Would you object to asking her?”

“Not in the least. I'll order my carriage and drive to my son's house, and be here again in half an hour. Come up as soon as you have finished excavating.”

Severne and his men were alone in the cellar when the stud was found, so there was no possibility of Boss's hearing of this cause of suspicion against him. But when



the landlord saw a whole posse of police arrive with shovels and pickaxes, as if they were about to dig a mine, he lost no time in causing the jeweller to be informed of these perilous movements.

Boss's alarm may easily be imagined. He had done a little quiet business in receiving stolen goods for many years. A stolen watch was brought to the worthy landlord of *The Jolly Cricketers*, he asked no questions, gave certain money for it, and passed it on at once to his employer. This sort of thing went on quietly enough; but in an evil day Boss was induced by hopes of greater gain to give harbourage to Walsh and his followers, thinking he should find some way of getting out of the scrape. Unluckily Vivian's fierce and resolute temper was too much for him—he could not keep the gang within moderate limits of daring; and now Walsh and the rest were

beyond the reach of the police, and there was no one who could help him in his difficulty.

True, there was Vivian ; but the Jew was afraid of him. He had seen him in a passion, had heard of his stern dealings with mutineers. There was no guessing what this hasty young gentleman might do if matters came to the worst. Besides, as he had ordered off all his followers, perhaps he also was beyond the reach of harm by this time. Boss was in a state of abject terror.

Sometimes he thought he would secure his safety by informing against his confederates. But what a terrible fall for him—a municipal magnate—to confess himself a felon ! He could not bring himself to this decided step. There *must* be some way of escape, if he could only find it. When the most ingenious rascal is regularly driven into a corner, his wits often desert him. Boss saw





himself of the delay to pay another visit to Mr. Paget, to whom he reported progress.

"Well," said the banker, "I am curious to know where you will emerge. It would be odd if you found yourself in some other person's cellar after all."

"And what does the young lady say to the stud?"

"She thinks it very like those she noticed, but is not quite sure of it."

"I got a clever detective down from London to do any work which my men could not manage. How would it be to send him to Boss's with the stud, under the pretext of having picked it up, and wanting to know its value?"

"A very good idea," said Mr. Paget.

So the Jew was attacked on both sides, by force and by subtlety. As he sat ruminating in his private room, one of his shopmen knocked at the door, and announced

that a person wished to speak to him. In a tremor of anticipation Boss entered the shop, and saw an individual who might have been almost anything in the world—except a gentleman. He looked shrewd enough for a betting-man, respectable enough for a bank-clerk, genial enough for a commercial traveller.

“Beg pardon for troubling you, sir,” he said. “I’m a stranger here, and a few days ago I picked up a little article of jewelry, and I thought I’d inquire at a respectable shop what it is worth, and what I had better do with it.”

“Perhaps this is a plant,” thought Boss. “Come this way,” he said ; and showed him into the room he had just left.

“It is a pretty thing,” said the stranger, producing the stud.

Bess recognised his own property, and felt reassured. He did not know where he had

dropped it, and, fearing it might have been in the cellars, had made no inquiry. But now he did not doubt that it had been lost in the street.

"This is mine," he said. "I shall be glad to pay you a fair reward for its recovery."

"But how am I to know it is yours?" rejoined the stranger, taking it back from him.

"I have two others exactly like it, which you shall see."

He went to the shop to fetch them. As he returned, he heard the sound of many footsteps, and was appalled to see a party of police, carrying lanterns and spades, ascending the steps which led from the lower part of his premises.

## CHAPTER X.

## VIVIAN SOLILOQUISES.

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in't."

"IT is perfectly certain," thought Vivian to himself, lazily lying on a couch in his private sitting-room at Broadoak Avon, "that I am an awful fool. All our family have been fools so long as there is any record of them, which is a confoundedly long period; but I am the worst of the whole race. I suppose that it was that sunstroke which did it: I was never quite a lunatic before, and now I am as mad as a hatter at a moment's notice. I wonder why

hatters are madder than other people.

“What ought I to do with a lucid interval, when I’ve got one like the present? I suppose the correct thing would be to start off to Colney Hatch, and request them to put me in a strait waistcoat. Shall I do it? I think not. It is pleasanter to sit here and smoke and drink iced cup. Only the worst of it is that I shall be doing something more desperate than ever. There’s a fiend driving me to do things I hate and despise. I verily believe that story of Faust and Mephistopheles, only *my* demon is more mischievous than Faust’s, and makes me do rascallier things. I am awfully afraid I shall carry off Eva some day, or that pretty plump Mary Ashow, that looks as melting a morsel as a beccafico. What the deuce am I to do?

“Faust could see *his* Mephistopheles, if we believe Goethe. That was an advantage,

at any rate. If I could see *mine*, I'd either twist his neck, or he should put an end to me. There's something mean about an invisible devil. Old Luther saw his demon, and hurled an inkstand at him ; but mine is a mean scoundrel, and daren't face me. I'd like to get him on the summit of an awful cliff, a thousand feet above the maddest sea, and either throw him over or go down myself. Why cannot the Christians work miracles, as their Founder did? I suppose the Pope professes to cast out devils. Shall I go to Rome and try the old gentleman? He likes the English ; perhaps he'd consent to operate on an Englishman with plenty of money to spare, and no prejudices to lose.

“ There's no medicine for a mind diseased, according to the highest authority I know. My case is quite hopeless, if that is true ; if these spiritual doctors don't know their craft. So I may just as well let my

companion-fiend drive me to something desperate, and so make an end of everything. Still, one may as well give oneself a chance. All roads lead to Rome, why shouldn't I get there by some extraordinary chance? I'll talk to a priest first. Plenty in Riverdale, no doubt.

"Ah, but there's one nearer. I remember, in the autumn, I rode through Avoncliff, and saw the prettiest little gem of a Catholic chapel. Just below the Castle it was, with the river making green the margin of its small graveyard. And close by were some conventual buildings. That's nearer than Rome, at any rate. I'll ride over and see what sort of a priest they've got there. Any priest may be Pope in time, so any priest is as good as the Pope.

"Whose picture is that of the devil playing chess with some fellow for his soul? I've been at that game for a good many



years, and every moment expect to hear Satan say, '*Checkmate in two moves.*' But if I can get a priest at my elbow—not a mere Anglican, but a good black Jesuit—perhaps it will be just the other way, and I shall be able to checkmate Cuvier's graminivorous friend. Egad, I'll try. These fellows ought to know the moves. What a lark it would be to shut him up! He'd go off in a blaze, I suppose, and leave a fine fragrance of sulphur behind him.

"Yes, I'll try."

Whereupon Vivian packed a few things into a knapsack, ordered round his favourite bay mare, and rode away through the park. Just at the gates he met Lady Eva in her pony-carriage.

"I am going away for a day or two, Eva," he said. "Excuse me to Rupert. He knows my irregular habits."

Avoncliff village is only about four miles

from Broadoak Avon. It is a picturesque old *vicus*, with some of the oddest old-fashioned houses in it that I have seen anywhere—quaint picturesque buildings with rare old gardens, and a general look of cosiness and port wine about them. It has three streets, which form a kind of scalene triangle, surrounding a large open slope of meadow-land where once stood the great Priory of Avoncliff, and where still remains the fragment of a gateway. Two or three rivulets intersect the village, bubbling through orchards, and supplying water to some tanyards in the valley before they reach the Avon.

Between Avoncliff and the river are the enormous ruins of one of England's noblest baronial castles. Half the mansions in the county have been dug out of this vast edifice, yet its remains would still furnish material for a dozen rows of the Marquis of

Westminster's huge buildings. It is worth while to pay Cerberus his necessary twopence, and climb some winding stair in a remote turret of the lordly pile, and look from its summit across the plain which Avon brightens, while shadows of flying clouds traverse the rich landscape. Even in its ruin, Avoncliff Castle bears witness to the greatness of the extinct forces which caused its existence. The Barons of England are gone, as absolutely as the patricians of Rome; if anybody builds a castle now, it is the *generator* or the railway contractor. Not such castles as this, though; this nineteenth century has its capacities, but could no more produce an Avoncliff Castle than a York Minster or a *Hamlet*.

One of the quaintest houses in the village is its principal inn, the *Talbot*—kept by one John Talbot, who is very proud of the coincidence of name and sign. A short ruddy

old host is he, who brews his own ale and drinks it, and is himself the best possible advertisement of its quality. To this inn Vivian rode, gave his mare to an ostler, and entered the public room. The majority of English country inns are surrendered to the commercial traveller, and a wayfarer of any other kind is horror-stricken by the furniture and the society of what is styled the "commercial room." But the *Talbot* is saved from this by the fact that numerous visitors to Avoncliff Castle require entertainment. So Vivian found himself in rather a pleasant parlour, whose bow-window looked across the Priory fields. At his demand for refreshment, a neat-handed waitress appeared, and he was supplied with a monster cheese of double Gloucester, and some strong home-brewed ale in a huge silver tankard, whereon a talbot was emblazoned. Therewith came crisp lettuce and radish, and

watercresses from the neighbouring brook. What a picture is a fair fresh salad, arranged by an artist's hand ! The deft artistic fingers should of course be feminine.

Vivian, having made a hearty luncheon, confided to the pretty waitress that he should want dinner and a bed, and then strolled out to find the Catholic chapel which he recollected, and to carry out his new notion. The little edifice was soon found. Its graveyard was cool beneath summer foliage, and on the grassy tombs were crosses and coronals of flowers. Especially did these abound in that part of the ground where—a beautiful arrangement—all the young children lay. *Delicæ lilia date*, says an ancient Latin epitaph. Alas, how vain to strew flowers which loving fingers never more can grasp !

The chapel door stood open ; a dim religious light pervaded the interior ; but Vivian could see candles burning on the altar, and

fragrant flowers in pots around it. The atmosphere seemed rather overladen with odour. Vivian walked round the chapel and leaned over the wall, looking meditatively at the river which ran beneath. As he expected, he was soon joined by a priest. An Anglican parson, if he sees a stranger within his precincts, gets out of his way; a priest of the Roman communion does just the reverse.

This priest was a man not more than thirty; tall, dark of complexion, with the darkest eyes Vivian had ever seen. They looked as if the light had faded in them—as if they had burnt out; but now and then they shone with a sudden lustre. After an interchange of complimentary conversation, the two men began a serious dialogue. I quote a portion of it.

*Vivian.*—I came here to find a priest.

*The Priest.*—You are a Catholic?

*Vivian.*—No : I am nothing. I was born a member of the Church of England, you know. English gentlemen generally are.

*The Priest.*—May I ask if you are married?

*Vivian.*—I am not. Ask what questions you please : my answers will usually be negative. I am a negation. But let me tell you briefly what I want. I am mad, sometimes. It seems as if a fiend possessed me, and drove me to do things entirely against my own will. You have heard of such cases?

*The Priest.*—Of very many.

*Vivian.*—Can you exorcise the demon?

*The Priest.*—It has been done. It is possible, sometimes. At any rate, the Church can fetter the fiend. I am myself in your condition. My demon is bound so that he cannot escape, but he tugs terribly at his chain sometimes.

*Vivian.*—It is curious that I should come to you.

*The Priest.*—It was appointed. I will tell you my story, but not now : I have a service to perform. Then, if you please, you can tell me yours.

*Vivian.*—Come and dine with me at the *Talbot* at six. Afterwards we can talk at our ease.

Rather to Vivian's surprise, the priest at once accepted. Then he entered his chapel to perform service, while Vivian lighted a cigar, and went to pass an hour amid the ruins of Avoncliff Castle.

Vivian found his sacerdotal visitor very pleasant company. He was not like a good many of these gentlemen, an Irish alumnus of Maynooth ; nor was he a mystic and sentimental Oxford-man, pervert by poverty of brain. He belonged to an old Cheshire family, which had never deserted the ancient



and he was an admirable scholar, and possessed besides an immense store of remarkable learning. After a simple country dinner of trout from the Avon, and a couple of glasses they sat over a bottle of excellent Madeira highly recommended by the host and talked very pleasantly.

As the evening darkened, the priest rose again and after a long break in the conversation during which Vivian enjoyed his glass he abruptly said—

"Will you hear my story?"

"With pleasure," said Vivian, and settled himself into a listening attitude.

"Men are under ordinary circumstances as I know; but there are some who are not. You have dined, you are smoking a good weed, you have a bottle of wine close at hand. I maintain that it is rather amusing to hear a fellow sitting away at a tremendous length,

like the affable archangel in *Paradise Lost*, or that quaint "Marinere" of Coleridge's. I think I should prefer the seaman to the seraph.

Vivian listened to the priest, and rather enjoyed his narrative, although it contained incidents which, since this is not a sensation romance, I dare not print. The grand finale of the story was intelligible and suggestive. The narrator was not a priest at the commencement. He held a commission in Her Majesty's army; but, the victim of demoniac possession, he committed a series of romantic crimes. Such was his statement. However, he was saved from eternal perdition by the sole possible method—namely, becoming a priest. That was the obvious panacea.

"Ah," thought Vivian, "I remember the beggar asked me if I was married. He wants to make a priest of me. Not if I

know it ! I suspect that story of his is a tissue of lies. Now, if I were to confess to him all my slight improprieties, he'd have me in his power. I think I'll wait."

So he made no response whatever to his priestly acquaintance's confession, and took no notice of his subtle suggestions. There was method in his madness. He walked with him to the very gate of his domain, and sauntered back smoking, and confided to his cigar his opinion that he had nearly put his foot in it.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE CONFESSIONAL.

“Confesser une femme ! imaginez ce que c’est !”

VIVIAN got, in the course of a few days, upon very intimate terms with his priest. He stayed at the *Talbot*, but he passed a good deal of his time at the priest’s dwelling, which was a residence specially designed for discomfort. And he gradually discovered, from slight signs and slighter self-betrayals, that the priest was an accomplished member of the Society of Jesus, and that he was quietly perverting the Protestant women of the neighbourhood in

a most successful way. There was the festival of a favourite feminine saint approaching, and the priest expected a large number of pretty penitents—many of them lambs from the rival fold.

This discovery awakened in Vivian's brain that mischievous imp that acted as his evil genius. He rode over to Riverdale, and thence took train to London, and supplied himself with certain chymicals, whereof chloroform was one. I always objected to ants till chloroform was invented. Vivian returned from town with his little scientific package of murder and mystery and mesmerism, and unscrupulously used it upon his sacerdotal friend. As a necessary consequence, when the naughty feminine perverts of the neighbourhood crowded to the confessional of the little chapel, Vivian was behind the bars.

He acquitted himself well. He heard a

great many secrets, and dealt mercifully with them. But among the ladies who came to confess, there were two whose arrival surprised him. One was Lady Eva Redfern : the other was Mary Ashow.

Both were easily accounted for. Lady Eva came of a half-Catholic race, and was merely returning towards an inherited predisposition. Mary had been at a boarding-school where there were a good many Romanist pupils, and the confessional had attracted her, as it does most girls. And, when a priest came to Avoncliff with singularly magnetic powers, it is not remarkable that these young women were drawn towards him.

At any rate, they came on this day when a false priest was in the confessional, and they both told him their stories in a very simple fashion.

The first to arrive was Mary Ashow.

Vivian, crouching in the sacerdotal niche, was amazed to see the innocent fair hair and soft blue eyes through the stone interstices ; he of course knew nothing of her tendency to Catholicism.

The shy young maiden had heretofore been troubled with no difficulties of confession. Hers had hitherto been trivial peccadilloes. She had been cross to her father, perhaps, or had neglected some small duty : it was impossible for her to recollect anything wickedder than that. But on this occasion she had come prepared to confess a terrible crime. She had fallen in love—at least she thought she had—and with a gentleman of high position, whom she had only seen a few times. She was a very simple maiden. She was quite well aware that it was foolish and wrong to listen to Vivian's pleasant words, uttered so musically ; knew, indeed, that he really meant nothing at all,

but was merely amusing himself. But her pretty bosom fluttered whenever he came near her—and she was terrified by the strange phenomenon of which she had no previous experience. There was no other man in the world whose presence produced any such effect upon her.

It took some time, after she had confessed her minor delinquencies, for her to put into words the great crime of all. But at last she did it, and Vivian had the satisfaction of knowing that the foolish little girl was in love with him.

• “Has he ever spoken of love to you?” asked the pseudo-priest, in a stern tone.

“No, your reverence,” whispered Mary, “but he said I had beautiful blue eyes and rosy lips.”

“Eyes and lips, little girl,” said the stern voice from the marble niche, “are delusions of the Evil One. Beauty is a misfortune :



ugliness is the gift of God. This gentleman of whom you tell me is a wicked person : you must avoid him. Never speak to him if you can help it. Whenever you do speak to him, you must perform a penance."

["Hang it !" thought Vivian, parenthetically ; " I wish I knew what sort of penance to inflict in such a case. The silly little thing wants a whipping, but I don't know the priestly way of putting it."]

There had been a pause. He resumed his discourse—

"Forget this gentleman of whom you tell me—forget all the nonsense he has talked to you. The ugliest men are the most honourable. You are pretty and foolish, and therefore in the way of temptation. If you must marry, my daughter, marry the ugliest man you know."

["That's good advice," said Vivian to himself, "for John Grainger is the ugliest

man she is likely to see, and John is a good fellow, and just the right sort to marry her. Egad, I wish one might smoke a cigar in this close little crib!"']

Vivian confessed two or three giggling Avoncliff young ladies after this, and then came his second surprise.

*Lady Eva Redfern knelt before him.*

Have you ever seen a beautiful pale blossom of magnolia smitten and burnt through by the sunlight, till its faint fragrance is caught away, and its fair petals are dyed a dark unnatural hue? Beautiful Lady Eva, as she knelt on the stone steps of the confessional, looked to Vivian like such a bloom. Her brown eyes were of a deeper colour; there was a strange dark flush upon her face, which was seen through her quivering eyelids, which changed the hue of her cheeks. A perceptible shudder ran through her as she fell upon her knees, lit-

tle dreaming that the man before whom she knelt was the man whose influence she dreaded.

And Vivian? If there had been any way of deserting the confessional, he would have got clear away the moment he saw his cousin. No such way existed. He was compelled to remain and listen to her confession, and so he resolved to do the best he could under the circumstances.

Her confession did not surprise him. There was a touch of subtle self-analysis about it. She loved her husband—yes, she was quite sure of that; but she had a cousin who exerted a strange influence over her, and who seemed able to make her do just what he pleased. He took no advantage of this; he treated her just like a child. But she loved him, and was afraid of him . . . . and what was she to do?

["Well," thought Vivian, "this is a very

singular coincidence. Two fair penitents, and both in love with the priest. Poor little Eva! I could find it in my heart to run away with her, if she were not my own cousin. Girls with any brain ought not to marry big men."]

This soliloquy took less time to utter than it does to read. Vivian was about to commence a grave lecture to his cousin, when his quick eye caught through the open doorway of the chapel a rapidly-advancing group. He recognised his acquaintance, the tall priest, and he thought one or two of the men with him looked very like members of the rural police.

He sprang out of his niche into the vestry, to the amazement of Lady Eva, and several female penitents who waited to be shriven. As the priest and his companions arrived at the church porch, Vivian started towards the *Talbot*. Swift as a hare, it

took him a very few minutes to reach that establishment ; he went straight to the stables, got out his mare, and was off at a pretty quick pace before the good priest had quite realised the fact that a Satanic *sacerdos* had been confessing his pet penitents.

Meantime, Vivian rode away in a merry mood. The adventure arrided him. He thought it singularly amusing, and hoped the two young ladies would recover from their heart-disease. He made the mare travel that day, and, at a late hour in the evening, he reached a solitary roadside inn. It was called the *Peacock* ; had been, in the grand old days of mail-coaches, a famous house ; stood now alone, miles from any other dwelling, upon a road which ran through wild desolate moorland. Why it was kept open, and how the landlord managed to live, were grave problems to his

neighbours, the nearest of whom lived five miles away ; but he, John Pinnell, did keep it open, and seemed to flourish without any appearance of custom. His rooms were kept in order as complete as when thirty coaches a day stopped at the *Peacock* to dine.

Vivian came hither quite by accident, never having been in this part of the country previously. He had ridden forward aimlessly, choosing his road by mere impulse, and asking no questions at the two or three wayside inns where he stopped to give the mare refreshment. The latter part of his journey had been singularly desolate ; it lay across wild bleak moors which formed the boundary between a county of park and forest and a county of mountain and ravine ; and he rode for miles without seeing a human habitation, or even a human being. At length he emerged upon the

Great North Road—not so wide a royal highway as in the days before steam, yet still a noble contrast to the lanes and bridle-paths which he had been traversing for hours. He pursued this for two or three miles, wondering whether he should meet with any place of refuge before night came on. By-and-by he beheld most welcome lights, and there was the *Peacock* inn, its lower windows sending out an inviting blaze upon the dark dull road.

“Here I’ll sleep,” thought Vivian.

A primitive kind of ostler took charge of his mare. But Vivian was not going to desert her; she had served him well that day, and many a time previously, and so he saw her comfortably fed and bedded before he thought of himself.

Then he walked into the bar, where a good fire was burning—not unacceptably, since the summer evening was cooled by a

dry east wind. The sole occupant of the bar was the landlord, a man of middle height, but immense breadth, with iron-grey hair, and a fine robust rosy countenance. He was gravely smoking a long pipe, and drinking a hot mixture, whose fragrance revealed the presence of "old Jamaica."

"Good evening, landlord," said our traveller. "I want some supper and a bed."

"You can have it, sir," said the landlord cheerily. "Polly, where are you?" he shouted.

Polly appeared. She was a thin old woman of about sixty, with a quaint pleasant face.

"What can this gentleman have for supper?" asked her master.

"Eggs and bacon," she responded, promptly.

"Nothing else?"

"Well, there may be some other things,



but I thought them Londoners always liked eggs and bacon when they came into the country."

"Anything will do for me," said Vivian.

"I am as hungry as a hunter."

"Ah, you're the sort of gentleman I like," said the old woman—"not like that bagman that was here the other day, and declared he *must* have roast duck and green peas. I served him out. I cooked him our old drake, that had his leg broke just in time. But *you* shall have some supper, sir."

Pending its arrival, Vivian lighted a cigar, and talked to the landlord.

"Your servant seems an original," he said.

"She's got odd fancies," was the reply. "If she likes anybody, she'll make 'em right snug, Polly will; but if she doesn't, she'll serve 'em all sorts of tricks. She took a

fancy to you the minute she saw you. You'll be put in the best bedroom, I can see."

"This seems a quiet place for a large inn like yours. But I suppose there are some towns in the neighbourhood."

"Nothing very near. No, we haven't much custom, but I took the old place for a whim. My grandfather was landlord here in the old coaching times. Well do I remember him when I was a boy; he was six inches taller than me, and bigger every way, and he lived the life of a king here. Lots of coaches stopping, lots of post-chaises too; people, tired on their journey, staying to sleep; young folks running away to get married in Scotland; men with strings of horses from the Yorkshire fairs; why, sir, the old place was as lively as a fair itself. Well, father died young, and grandfather meant me to have the place after him; but when he was close upon seventy he got soft

about a little girl of eighteen, and actually married her. She and I, I remember, were born in the same month, and I used to make love to her myself—and grandfather married her! So I thought it was pretty well time to be off out of this; and I got a little money that my poor mother had left me, and went to Australia. There I was lucky; picked up some nuggets; bought a bit of waste land in Melbourne, and sold it ten years after for as many thousands as I gave pounds for it; made money by sheep-farming, and at last came back pretty well off, and anxious to hear what had happened to my grandfather. Poor old fellow! His young wife led him a terrible life, and spent all the money he had saved, and at last ran away with a commercial traveller. Then came steam, and the coaches left the road; and grandfather found himself without any business. He was so badly off by this time

that the bailiffs were in the house, and I think that killed him.

“The *Peacock* was kept open for some time after his death, but of course did not pay its expenses. When I returned it had been shut up about a year. I came back to the old place, sir, and saw grass growing in the yard, where everything had been so brisk and busy, and all the fine old rooms shut up, and the house going to rack and ruin. I cried about it—fool that I was. I thought of grandfather standing on the steps of the front door—the biggest man in the shire—and handing up a large glass of hot brandy-and-water to his old crony Dick Edgcumbe, that used to drive the early mail. Ay, and couldn’t he drive! Well, I blubbered a little, and then I made up my mind to do a very silly thing—what somebody says they call very Rome-antic—though I don’t see what the Pope has to do with it.

I bought the old inn, and fitted it up just as it used to be in grandfather's time ; and here I live, and wish the dear old coaches would come back again.

"There's one gentleman gives me great pleasure. He comes here regularly once a month, driving four-in-hand. His uncle was a great man for a team, but *he* didn't care about it ; and when the old gentleman died, the nephew found an estate left him on condition of his driving four-in-hand a hundred miles every month in the year. He always brings his drag this way, and generally has a lot of his friends and their ladies with him. I expect he'll be here to-morrow or next day."

"I'll stay till he comes," said Vivian.

At this moment Polly entered to announce supper. Vivian found that the old lady verified her master's statement about her. She

could give a good supper to people she fancied. No meagre fare of eggs and bacon had to content him; he had various viands, which I would willingly describe if my critics did not accuse me of being far too fond of describing comestibles. The charge is true enough: yet let me ask what Homer would be if the famous feeds of his heroes were omitted. However, as I narrated what Vivian and his sacerdotal guest had for dinner at Avoncliff, I won't say a word concerning the supper which Polly prepared for him at the *Peacock*.

The landlord, with his own massive hands, brought in a bottle of rare old port. Faith, you seldom see such wines in these times of Gladstone claret. In the large thin bell-glass it shone a dark imperial purple, with sparks of violet light scintillating through it. The spirit of the young Conqueror of Asia was imprisoned there. As Vivian

drank it there came a calm upon his perturbed brain, and he felt in milder mood than at any time since his early days with Earine in the Greek island.

So he finished his bottle slowly, and then Polly showed him to his chamber. That antiquated *cameriste* was resolved to make him comfortable. A pleasant fire burnt on the open hearth of a vast oak-wainscoted room, wherein the great old-fashioned bedstead seemed to occupy but little space. Wax candles were burning in several silver sconces, and throwing strange gleams of light upon the quaint portraits which hung against the walls.

One of these, right opposite the foot of the bed, represented a tall old lady with an immense quantity of dishevelled grey hair. She was in an antique costume, with a scarlet cloak thrown over her shoulders. There was a hideous stare in her bright blue eyes,

and on her face a mixed expression of rage and terror, while her arms were stretched forward, and her white jewelled hands clenched together as if in agony. Both expression and colour showed this to be the work of a great painter.

“Nice old lady to have in one’s room all night,” soliloquised Vivian on his pillow. “She looks as if she’d step out of the canvas and stab me. Altogether this is a queer establishment. I wish I had *The Castle of Otranto* to read myself to sleep.”

However, the old lady did not step out of her canvas, or in any way haunt him. He slept most peaceably: and when he looked at his watch in the morning, it was eleven o’clock.

He went to the window, which opened towards the high road. Brilliant sunshine gladdened the wide expanse of barren moorland, and made the little pools amid the blos-



soming furze look like splashes of diamond fringed with gold. The sun was too much for the east wind this morning—that aërial tormentor of man and beast had his worst sting taken out of him, and actually gave pleasant life to the scene by driving stray clouds at a great rate across the sky, and tossing the foliage of the few trees which were visible. Sunshine and moonlight, each in its way, will glorify any scene. The one gives life and power; the other gives mystery and magic.

As Vivian stood at the open window, drinking in the ozone of the moorland air, there came suddenly upon his ear the note of a bugle. I know no sound so exhilarating. It is the music of adventure; it belongs to the soldier and the hunter; it once belonged to the four-horsed coach. Vivian knew what it meant. Only two minutes, and up came a splendid team, three bright

bays and a roan, driven, he could see, by a capital whip. Instantly a group formed at the inn door, and ostlers began to unharness the horses, and the passengers prepared to descend. There were ladies among them ; but Vivian, being in *déshabille*, could not stay to look at them.

## CHAPTER XII.

## FOUR-IN-HAND.

“But put your best foot forward, or I fear  
That we shall miss the mail.”

A LACK, Mr. Tennyson, I have missed the mail for more years than I wish to reckon—missed the wholesome travel with the wind on your face, and the passage swift, but not too swift, through ever-varying scenery, and the gay interchange of welcome and humour, and the stoppages at roadside inns, and the cheery tankard, and all the possibility of adventures. Railways are excellent things, and I wonder how the

world got on without them ; but twenty or thirty miles on the best line in England thrills every nerve in my body, and makes my brain throb, and causes me to feel so grimy that I abhor myself. Then the hideous smell of the engine, the dust and ashes that attack your eyes and nostrils, the fustiness of the carriages, the maniacal scream of the steam-whistle, the grinding and groaning noises of the whole machine—are not these abominations?

The Poet Laureate has ventured to versify the visions of those who expect that the air will be the highway of the future. I hope it may.

Those who have never sailed in a balloon cannot conceive how perfect a mode of motion it is. In calm weather the car seems stationary ; the earth seems to be descending from it or approaching it, as the case may be. And then the exquisite silence of

the mid-ether—sound of the world below reaching you with increasing faintness as you rise into the serene realm of air. And consider what a blessing the balloon system would be to those who don't travel and don't want to. What can be more irritating to a quiet man, leaning over his garden gate, than to see restless people whirling by in all kinds of vehicles, raising clouds of dust and making an objectionable noise?

A landscape photographer once told me that he had never taken a picture in any part of England without discovering a clothes-line in it. Is there any spot between the four seas where you may not sometimes hear the scream of the locomotive? And, to make matters worse, the highways and by-ways are now infested by the agricultural engines.

When Vivian came downstairs he found the driver of the four-in-hand talking to the

landlord in the bar. He was a good-looking smooth-faced, florid man of forty, getting a trifle stout, and with the most amiable expression of countenance. He wore a blue coat with brass buttons.

"Your breakfast is ready as soon as you like, sir," said the landlord. "I hope you slept well. I quite forgot to tell you that Polly was going to put you in the haunted room—it's the best in the house."

"Haunted by that fierce-looking old lady, no doubt. She didn't trouble me, Mr. Pinnell. I slept most virtuously."

"Excuse me, sir," said the man of the four-in-hand, "but isn't your name Vivian?"

"Certainly it is."

"Ay, and mine's Eastlake. Don't you remember Jack Eastlake, at old Giles's?"

Old Giles, the gentleman thus irreverently mentioned, had kept a preparatory school whither Vivian went to be made ready for

Eton. Eastlake, though some years his senior, remembered him, but the recollection was not reciprocal. There are men whose physical development is fluent, and who change so completely during each stage of life that they are scarcely recognisable after an absence of four or five years. There are also men whose physical character is unchangeable in essence through all changes of accident. If you had known Vivian in his babyhood, you would recognise him in the prime of life—ay, or at the age of a hundred.

“By Jove!” exclaimed Eastlake, cheerily, when the recognition had been verified, “I am so glad! What a mischievous little fellow you were at old Giles’s! Let us all breakfast together. There’s nobody but my daughter and her companion, a jolly little girl, and my secretary. I never could spell, you know, or write grammar; so now I’ve

got a lot of money, I keep a secretary. He saves me heaps of trouble."

"Your secretary has a very easy time of it, I suspect. And your daughter—how old is the young lady?"

"Upon my honour, I don't know. Somewhere between seventeen and five-and-twenty. A nice-looking girl, you'll say; but, by Jove! you should see Miss Delisle, her companion."

"Ah, Jack, Jack," said Vivian, gravely, "you are falling in love with Miss Delisle! You will be committing matrimony a second time, as if once were not enough."

Jack Eastlake laughed in his customary cheerful way. "Come along," he said; "let us go and find the girls, and have some breakfast. Polly means to give us a good breakfast, I hope, Pinnell."

"No fear about that, sir," responded the landlord.



They went to the room designed as their breakfast-room, and found no one there save the secretary. If secretaries were always chosen for their acumen, he would never have found a place. His capacities were threefold—curly hair, a clerk-like hand, and a miraculous appetite. However, he was a sufficient secretary for Eastlake, whose correspondence had no complexities, and the majority of whose letters came from people who knew he was wealthy, and wanted to get money out of him.

The begging-letter-writer has a recognised vocation in this country. I wonder he does not call himself a *solicitor*. A man has only to be supposed rich—only to build a church, provide dwellings for the poor, win a Derby, start a racing-yacht, and he will have hordes of these fellows after him. Eastlake's secretary hadn't much sense, but he had sense enough to burn all letters of

this character. It may be convenient to mention that his name was Haynes.

Presently entered the two young ladies. Clara Eastlake was a nice plump little person, with the very best of tempers—in fact, her father's own daughter. You would not suspect her of much character, but doubtless she would make an excellent wife (especially being an heiress) to any man who falls into the current belief that characterless women are the best. It is an excellent creed for men who have not much character themselves.

But Clara's companion was quite another kind of creature. She was perfect in form, like a Greek statue. She had the wondrous lines of brow and nose, of bust and waist, that men see in the old marble, and wonder if there ever were such women. Ay, and even now there *are* such women. Earine was one.

For Miss Farnham's companion was Earine. Now her sea-blue eyes opened as she looked upon a creature toward her height of six feet. "What in the name was ever made of that?" he thought her side as Earine, speaking the perfect French: he had heard Earine mention—Miss Devereux—but it had occurred no suspicion in his mind, seeing that the name is one of uncommon commonness.

But now Earine entered the room, dressed (graceless of Paris fashions help me!) in the precise style of the precise moment. Earine, a trio of years older than when he saw her first, when she wore nothing save the scanty crocus vest—scanty, yet sufficient apparel for a Greek island.

Earine, though taken by surprise, was of course less surprised than Vivian—she knew him to be in England, so that there was a possibility of her meeting him. But Vivian,

after his first sudden start of amazement, carried the matter with his customary coolness.

“Glad to see you looking so well, Miss Delisle,” he said. “I have met Miss Delisle before, Eastlake.”

“Old friends, eh?” said that amiable individual. “I am very glad. We shall get on together all the better. Come, let us have breakfast.”

So they sat down to the most artistic matutinal meal which Polly could produce, and got into gossiping conversation over it.

“So you have met Miss Delisle before, Vivian,” said Eastlake. “What a very curious coincidence!”

“Very,” replied Vivian.

“Two coincidences together, in fact,” continued Eastlake, “meeting me and meeting Miss Delisle. Very remarkable, I call it. Let me give you some lobster salad.”

As they chatted over the breakfast table, Earine looked on in a state of strange silence; and even Miss Eastlake, with a dim instinctive perception that there was something inexplicable in the air, was rather less than usual. That is to say, she could not contrive to eat more than a couple of kidneys, half a haddock, the tail and major claw of a lobster, a couple of eggs, and two or three slices of Canterbury brawn. Her affectionate papa noticed the smallness of her appetite, and asked if she did not feel well.

"Let's have a smoke," said Eastlake, when breakfast was over, "and just a drop of brandy-and-soda to freshen the palate. What are you going to do with yourself, Vivian?"

"To-day, do you mean?"

"To-day, and for several days. I'm not going to let you run away from me now

that we have met in this romantic way. I intended to stay here a day or two: but won't you drive on with me and see my place? I wish you would stop for a month, or a year if you like."

"My dear Eastlake——" began Vivian.

"Call me Jack," he said.

"Well, Jack, my dear boy, I'll stay with you here, and I'll drive with you to your own place. But I am a confounded restless fellow, and you must forgive me if I should suddenly find it necessary to leave you. Take me as I am, old fellow, and don't quarrel with me if I inadvertently offend you—that's all I ask."

"Quarrel with you!" ejaculated Eastlake.

"Why, I never quarrelled with anybody in the whole course of my life, and it isn't likely I shall begin by quarrelling with you."

"Upon my honour," replied Vivian, "I don't think it is."

## CHAPTER XIII.

## EARINE.

“ White and sweet, white and sweet,  
 Is the hawthorn bloom round the cuckoo’s nest :  
 White and sweet are my true love’s feet,  
 And the song of spring’s in her fragrant breast.”

**W**HEN Vivian escaped from his friend Eastlake, and found himself alone, he began to wonder how the deuce Earine came into the position wherein he found her. He had left her to be educated at Rouen ; and now he had sent Mark Walsh to look after her ; but here she was, unexpectedly, in England, acting as companion to the rather silly daughter of a very good fellow, who was an unquestionable muff. However, Vivian was a cool hand, and knew that

most things have a tendency to explain themselves, and was well accustomed to a waiting game ; so he was singularly patient until it should please Earine to tell him how it was that he met her in such a place and under such circumstances.

The time soon came. Earine herself—but I must let her tell her story as she told it to Vivian ; at any rate, she managed to get hold of him very soon after breakfast, in a long room of the old hostelry which had once been an assembly room. He, in a wandering humour, was investigating the premises ; she (by instinct, doubtless) knew where he was, and rushed into his arms. He kissed her red ripe lips and tremulous eyelids, and then, putting her at arm's length with a humorous smile, said—

“ Well, child, so you have run away from school ? ”


*Earine.*—Shall I tell you all ? Are you



what you were on the island two years ago? Can you be patient? Do you love?

*Vivian.*—Foolish child! I thought you knew me by this time. Tell your story and I will listen.

*Earine.*—It was very cruel to put me in that place, you know. But I have read books, and I have thought, and I see that both men and women are cruel. Men are cruel from thoughtlessness or selfishness: women are cruel because they love cruelty. The women there were cruel to me; they humiliated me with menial offices; they even used the scourge. I am your slave; I submitted, since it was you who placed me there. I should have remained till now, and endured everything, but the convent was suddenly closed. Something was wrong—some wickedness had been done; every one was to go home. I could not send to you, for I did not know where; I was to



wait, you remember, till Mark came for me. There was a young English lady there who was a great friend of mine ; she asked me to come with her, and I was glad to accept. Her father is a great friend of Mr. Eastlake's, and knew that he wanted a companion for his daughter. That is how you find me here.

*Vivian.*—Thank all the gods of Olympus for this, and especially Aphrodite. To her will I presently offer libations of the best wine to be found here. But now tell me, Earine, do you like England best, or Greece? And what am I to do with you?

*Earine.*—I love you. I am your slave. I am happy where you are, yet I delight in winds that are softer, and waves that are always bright and calm.

*Vivian.*—Did you expect to meet me again?

*Earine.*—I knew I must. I knew that

SPHRODIA.—WILL YOU SUFFER ME TO SPEAK TO  
 YOU WITH CONFIDENCE? I AM NOT  
 HERE FOR MYSELF, BUT FOR THE GOD. AS  
 I BELIEVE HIM TO BE GOD, I AM SURE OF HIS GRACE.  
 HE WILL NOT EVER DECEIVE ME. I HAVE  
 SAID TO HIM, LET ME VISIT—NOT TO SEE  
 ABOUT YOU—BUT TO KNOW—SHOULD I BE  
 SEPARATED—AND NOW I COME TO HIM, TO BE  
 WITH HIM FOREVER. I AM OBTAINING  
 VISUAL. I KNOW WHAT I FEEL—I KNOW—I LOVE  
 YOU. PERHAPS YOU DO NOT LOVE ME. NEVER  
 MIND—I AM YOUR SLAVE, AND WILL DO WHAT  
 YOU PLEASE.

SPHRODIA.—AL I SHOULD LIKE TO BE BACK  
 WITH YOU AGAIN.

SPHRODIA.—WELCOME THOSE DEAR MEN.

SPHRODIA.—THOSE DEAR MEN WERE VERY  
 WORTHY, WISE. THEY BROUGHT US WINE AND  
 FRUIT AND VICTUALS; THEY BROUGHT YOU FOOLISH  
 LITTLE GIRL! WHAT SAYS SAPPHO?—

"Hesperus, thou in the East with beauty abundantly laden:

Wine and the kid dost thou bring. Thou bringst to the mother the maiden."

They were as generous to me as Hesperus once to your mother.

*Earine*.—I would rather not see them any more.

*Vivian*.—Probably you never will. And what have you been reading since I saw you?

*Earine*.—Look. Here is the dear little volume you told me always to keep.

She took from her bosom a small book bound in Russia leather. It was the *Odyssey*—a copy printed in Padua two centuries ago.

*Vivian*.—So you have not forgotten Homeros. I am glad of that.

*Earine*.—It is the only book of all you gave me. The women at the convent said they were all wicked books. The first few days they were very kind to me; the Prioress

was away, and it was a sort of holiday. When she came back she sent for me, and asked me to tell her all about myself. So I told her of my life on the island with you—ah, what a happy life it was!—and she was dreadfully shocked, and said you were awfully wicked.

*Vivian.*—Faith, the old lady had some penetration.

*Earine.*—O, she wasn't at all old—only two or three and twenty; but she came of some noble family that were great benefactors to the convent.

*Vivian.*—Ay, girls are always the worse tyrants. So she took your books away?

*Earine.*—Yes; she had them all brought—and the very first she saw was *Don Juan*. O, you should have seen her rage. She was going to throw it on the fire, when I sprang at her and tore it out of her hands. This was a fearful offence. She sent for

two of the sisters—I fought like a panther, but they were too strong for me—and my poor shoulders were lacerated with a whip of knotted cords.

*Vivian.*—The brutes !

*Earine.*—O, the Prioress was very fond of this amusement, and never spared anybody. There was one poor nun who had been in the convent twenty years, and was second in authority before the Prioress came. It seems she expected to have been made Prioress. I suppose the other knew this, for she took a dislike to her, and put her in the very lowest rank, and found some reason for punishing her almost every day. Poor thing, she used to go about the place crying like a great baby.

*Vivian.*—I don't wonder at that ; so did you, I suppose.

*Earine.*—No, indeed. They could not make me cry, with all their cruelty. The


Prioress was very angry, and declared I was possessed with a devil.

*Vivian.*—It must have been a nice establishment. Yet I heard it highly recommended, and I know some English girls of good family were sent there.

*Earine.*—O, yes, there were several. But they told me it was not so bad until the new Prioress came. Still, they were always very strict and severe. Nobody could complain, you know, because all letters that came or went were read by the Prioress.

*Vivian.*—Was there no way of sending a letter secretly?

*Earine.*—Miss Adams, my great friend, you know, resolved to try. There was a servant called Lisette, who used to be very kind and obliging to Miss Adams and me. We both thought she could be trusted; so Emily wrote a letter to her papa, and gave Lisette some gold to post it. The little hy-



pocrite took it straight to the Prioress.

*Vivian.*—Who scolded you, I suppose.

*Earine.*—Scolded, no! It was seldom she took the trouble to scold. No, she had the discipline administered rather more sharply than usual; and poor Emily, who is not so hard as I am, couldn't help screaming. I was very sorry for that.

*Vivian.*—I don't think you could blame her much.

*Earine.*—I suppose not. She said it was the shame she cared about, and not the pain. I think it was much greater shame to the Prioress and her assistants than to us, who were forced to submit. But Emily declared I couldn't understand it, because my education had been neglected.

*Vivian.*—You seem to have borne your persecution philosophically.

*Earine.*—I despised that cruel woman. I would not let her have any power over me.



The English girls used always to make a fuss and scream, and kneel down and beg to be forgiven this time—and I know she liked to see it. But after the first, when I saw resistance was no good, I used to clench my teeth and my hands, and let them do just what they liked to me. I wouldn't kneel to that infamous creature. And that poor Emily, who slept in the next bed to mine, would lie half the night after punishment moaning and sobbing and praying. What was the use of it?

*Vivian.*—Not much, certainly. I wonder some of the girls didn't try to run away.

*Earine.*—I thought of that, and I am sure I could have done it; but I determined to stay where you placed me. I knew it must end some day.

*Vivian.*—And how did it end?

*Earine.*—I don't know what had been done, but the police came to the convent

We had the satisfaction of seeing the Prioress and several other nuns handcuffed and marched away ; but we never heard what became of them. In a few days the parents of the girls came or sent for them, and Emily's father took compassion on me.

*Vivian.*—Well, I hope the Prioress was served as she served you ; but I suppose there is no chance of that. If she were not in the clutches of the police I should send Mark Walsh to avenge you. What should we do with her, if we had her on our island ?

*Earine.*—Don't talk of it. I have no wish for revenge. I only hope never to know anything more of her.

This colloquy, as I have said, took place in the old dusty assembly-room, where, in forgotten days, the magnates of the county had dined, and the belles of the county had danced. Vivian smoked, and walked up

and down while Pinnell told her story with pleasant vivacity. At this point Jack Eastlake's voice was heard.

"Come, then—come, Miss Delisle—is a charming day: would you walk or drive before luncheon?"

"Are you going to leave your team out?"

"I think so: they ought to have a little exercise."

"Then I'll go with you and admire your skill as a whip. Is there a post-office anywhere near? I want to send a letter."

"The nearest is Ashdown village," said the landlord: "about five miles down the road, and then about a mile further along a turning to the right."

"I know it," said Eastlake. "We'll drive there. Pinnell, make some claret-cup while I look after the prads. The ice is in the hind box."

Vivian's letter was soon written. It was

to Mark Walsh, at a post-office in eastern London, and ran thus :—

“If you have returned, come here at once. Earine is safe.”

So they drove to Ashdown, posted the letter, and were back in fifty-five minutes without the team's turning a hair.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## AT BIRKLANDS.

*“ Earine has sucked the breath of Spring—  
And I have touched thy lips, Earine.”*

NEXT day the party proceeded to Birklands, Eastlake's inheritance—a handsome modern mansion in a well-timbered park, with gardens and conservatories kept in excellent order. Here Vivian promised his hospitable friend to stay as long as he could manage to be tranquil. And he now told Eastlake certain portions of Earine's story, and arranged with him that she should still be his daughter's companion.

“ You see, Jack,” he said, “ being a bachelor without an establishment, I can do


nothing with her—and my cousin Lady Eva Redfern might think her a bore—whereas you and your daughter seem to like her. There need not be any difference made because I pay her expenses instead of you.”

“All right,” replied Eastlake. “Have it your own way. I shall be glad to keep her till she gets tired of us. But she’s a deuced fine girl, and you’ll have her wanting to marry somebody soon.”

“I shall leave you to play papa, and see that she doesn’t elope.”

To Earine herself he said for the present nothing as to the arrangement, but allowed matters to go on just as hitherto. In the course of a few days, Mark Walsh arrived, sent on from the *Peacock*. Vivian gave him private audience.

“You’ve found the young lady, sir, which is lucky; and I suppose she has told you the convent was broken up.”



“Yes: what was the cause?”


“The head of the convent turned out to be an impostor,” said Mark. “The right person was a young lady belonging to a very high family—I forget the name. She was rather weak-minded, so I suppose she was to have this place just as an English squire puts his stupidest son into the Church. She started from her father’s castle to come to Rouen, with no companion except her maid, who had been with her some years, and the maid’s lover, who was a groom in her father’s service. He was to see them safely to Rouen, and return home again. Now the servant-girl had obtained so much influence over this silly young lady, that she was quite afraid of her; and at a place on the way where they spent the night, the maid and mistress changed clothes and changed places, and this servant-girl actually took possession of the chief place in the convent.”

"She must have been a clever creature," said Vivian.

"Uncommonly clever, they tell me. Nobody found her out. The poor young lady acted as her servant, and did not attempt to betray her. She was a terrible tyrant, and used to be very cruel to all the nuns and the young ladies in the convent-school; it was the natural spite, I suppose, sir, of a woman who had always been a servant, and now found herself set above her betters. I am afraid Miss Earine was badly treated there."

"How was she found out at last?" inquired Vivian.

"Through her lover. She sent him money to keep him quiet, but he got drunk pretty often, and said things which made his master suspicious. So the old gentleman went off to Rouen to see his daughter, and the whole affair was soon found out. The





"The young woman was very much surprised to find it so simple to get the things she wanted. She had never before seen the things she wanted so cheaply. She had never before seen the things she wanted so cheaply."

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"Well, I am glad to hear it. Mark here, do you think you can safely go to Harrodsburg, and find out how matters are there? I don't want you to run any risk."

“It is quite safe, sir. I should very much like to hear how poor old Boss got over his difficulties.”

Mark started on his second tour of investigation, and Vivian remained at Birklands. He was not eager to move. Life was easy enough with Eastlake and his daughter, who cared for little beyond eating, drinking, and sleeping. But what kept him at Birklands was the presence of Earine. She brought back to him the halcyon days of the Ægean, before the arrow of Apollo had touched his brain with fire. It was a delight to him to make her read Homer, in a voice as mellow as gold, to watch her blue eyes brighten whenever he looked at her, to see her, stately and slender as Nausikaa, pass swiftly over the lawns. Poor Clara Eastlake by her side looked like a sedate donkey beside a deer of the Exmoor.

Eastlake and his daughter were of lazy



would, and usually breakfasted at eleven. Vivian loved the early morning when multitudinous dewdrops sprinkle grass and leafage, and the flowers have their freshest fragrance, and the rejoicing birds their most delicious song. He liked a dip in the river just after dawn, when the water is still icy-cool. And to Earine it was delight ineffable to be permitted to meet him on the terrace long ere any other creature was moving, and find in the first vision of the day something fairer than all the visions of night.

One divine morning Earine was on the terrace at six, in obedience to Vivian's command. Soon she saw him coming up from the river, freshened by his dip. She ran forward and kissed his hand. She was just as tall as Vivian, and her very playfulness was stately.

*Vivian.*—Your young eyes are dream-

haunted, Earine. You are come straight from Dreamland. Whom did you meet there?

*Earine.*—You, you, only you.

*Vivian.*—There is an old legend about a maiden

“ Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of flowers.”

If some sorcerer made you out of flowers, he found your figure in the lily of Nile, and the colour of your breast and the fragrance of your breath in the gardenia blossom. As for your eyes, I don't believe he made them of flowers: they are two spoonfuls of sapphire sea-water. After all, perhaps you were made of sea-foam, and nothing else—like Aphrodite. But you are a confoundedly pretty girl, Earine, and I think Jack Eastlake is in love with you.

*Earine.*—Then I must go away from here.

*Vivian.*—You must do no such thing. Wouldn't you like to be Mrs. Eastlake, and

have that good fat Clara for a daughter?

*Earine.*—Why do you ask such teasing questions?

*Vivian.*—Well, I will be serious. Listen. You love me, I know. You would like to go back to the island with me. And I am beginning to think I love you, child. But you know I am mad sometimes, and I am afraid of what I may do in my madness. I might kill you, perhaps.

*Earine.*—O, I am not afraid. You love me. You said you loved me. Love will cure you.

*Vivian.*—I wish I were sure of it. I am going to try myself, Earine. If I can get back my old clearness of mind, then you know what will happen. If not, it would be cruel of me to marry you.

*Earine.*—No, no, no, it would not be cruel. Don't go away. I can cure you—I know I can. You may kill me if you will.

*Vivian.*—I am going away to-day, my child, but you shall soon see me again. And you are to write me little notes in Greek, and tell me all about yourself and your drives every month, and what adventures you meet at the *Peacock*, and whether Mr. Eastlake has proposed. Do you understand?

*Earine.*—I will obey. If you sent me back to that cruel convent, I should go. But I wish you would let me follow you as your page. I don't want you to leave me.

*Vivian.*—You are a foolish loving little girl. But you are older now, and wiser, are you not? than when Mark Walsh brought you to me in your crocus chitonion. And if you will reflect a little, you will see that I am doing the best thing. But pshaw! why should I reason with you? Women have no reason, only instinct.

*Earine.*—And my instinct tells me that I can cure you, and that no one else can. But

you will not listen, I know. I must submit.

*Vivian.*—Yes, Petale, you must submit. I shall start to-day, after luncheon. If all goes well with me, you will soon see me again. So now, one kiss from that mouth, ruddy as the cyclamen's, and then I'll go and forage for breakfast. If I wait for Eastlake, I shall starve. Come in, and make me some tea.

That afternoon Vivian started, whispering to the bay mare as he mounted that they had a long journey to go. The beautiful creature replied with an intelligent whinny. Eastlake was heartily sorry to lose his old schoolfellow, and extorted a promise of early return. Even the dumpy Clara was affected; to her Vivian was a brilliant vision such as had never before crossed her narrow horizon.

Vivian slept one night on the road. The following afternoon, just as Lady Eva's

ponies were waiting for her at the door of Broadoak Avon, he rode leisurely up the avenue.



## CHAPTER XV.

## MADAME DE PETIGNY GARNUCHOT.

“On appelle ces gens, à la ville, des mouchards ; à l'armée, des espions ; à la cour, des agens secrets ; aux champs, ils n'ont point de nom encore, n'étant connu que depuis peu. Ils s'étendent, se répandent à mesure que la morale publique s'organise.”

LADY EVA was very glad to see her cousin. She came down the steps accompanied by a lady—foreign, evidently, and evidently *espiègle*—whom she introduced as Madame de Petigny Garnuchot. Madame had black sparkling eyes and a small nervous hand ; she wore deep mourning.

“I am so pleased that you have come back at last, Val,” said Lady Eva. “Rupert is gone to Riverdale. There is a French gentleman staying with us, a friend of Ru-

pert's, M. Achille Catelan. You will find him in the library. I shall soon be back."

Of course Vivian knew Achille Catelan by name. Catelan is a poet, a feuilletonist, and a Red Republican. And yet a friend of that Tory of the highest school, Squire Redfern! Yes, for they had one thing in common. The Squire thought the hereditary aristocracy should govern; the democrat thought that power belonged to the populace, and that the populace should choose poets like himself to lead them; but they both hated and despised one Louis Napoleon.

The two new-comers at Broadoak Avon greatly enlivened the evenings. M. Catelan was a man of fifty, tall, slender, grey, somewhat haughty in his bearing; a man, clearly, who could use pen and rapier with equal facility. Catelan's conversation was delightful. He knew everything and everybody

in that beautiful and fearful Paris which is such an enigma to Englishmen. He had a light liking for the Bourbons, and was, indeed, on friendly terms with one or two of the Orleans Princes; but France as a republic was his dream—and that dream made him an exile.

Vivian tried to reason with him on this point, but it is so difficult to see what lies nearest home. Vivian's theory about France was that it should be the scene of a brilliant monarchy, a splendid court, a chivalrous aristocracy; but at the same time general freedom and ample elbow room for the wits who, from Pascal and Courier down to Prévost-Paradol, have always been freely generated on the soil of France. M. Catelan looked upon this as Utopian; saw no future for France except through democracy.

Madame de Petigny Garnuchot talked little, but usually to the purpose. A clever

woman, evidently ; but more noticeable than her cleverness was her intense, yet quiet earnestness. She was a woman with ideas of her own, which she was resolved to carry out—so at least it appeared to Vivian.

When he got an opportunity of talking quietly to his cousin, he asked her a few questions about her guests. Catelan, as we have seen, was the Squire's friend : Redfern had met him in London, and had induced him to forego conspiracy for a time, and take to the country. Madame Garnuchot, on the other hand, had been invited by Eva herself: how known to Eva did not appear, but she was making a kind of tour from one part of England to the other.

"I think she is so charming," said Lady Eva.

"Can't say I admire her," said Vivian. "She looks false. But I do like old Catelan, and mean to cultivate his acquaintance."

Catelan, as most men know, was worth cultivating. But Vivian did not find him peculiarly willing to be cultivated. Catelan was a man whom the Emperor Napoleon would gladly have encouraged, would gladly have made into a senator ; but Catelan (like the Emperor himself) was an inveterate conspirator. So he soon made Paris a place too hot to hold him ; and I daresay the unrivalled police of Lutetia could have stayed his exit, had it so pleased them ; but this will I say for the Emperor (I who have drunk stout from the pewter with him in days ante-imperial), that never has he done a harsh deed that was unnecessary.

Vivian did not particularly admire Madame de Petigny Garnuchot, but he had a theory to the effect that if you flirt with a woman you will soon find her out, and so he flirted with this rather mysterious lady. She took to it very kindly. I need hardly

say that Vivian performed his part of the business remarkably well—indeed, he so completely fooled Madame, that she began to look forward to a change of name. Meanwhile he had been forming his own conclusions in regard to her. What those conclusions were will presently appear.

Meanwhile let a word or two be said in regard to the condition of Riverdale, from which town Vivian had received a report by Mark Walsh before he ventured to show himself at Broadoak Avon. The town had settled into phlegmatic quietude in reference to the robberies. Boss, the jeweller, had lost his presence of mind for a moment when he saw the police marching up his cellar stairs, but he regained it very rapidly, according to the habit of the Hebrew, and reflected that if he made no confessions, they would find it hard to make a case against him. So he was resolutely reticent.

In his first terror he had thought of confessing everything, and telling what he knew about Vivian; but he thought better of it, and held his tongue, and the police were baffled. There was no case against him. There was strong suspicion of course, and everybody believed all manner of things; but Boss quietly ignored it all, and carried on his business in his usual manner, and flourished as of old. There was, I regret to say, a Tory newspaper in the town, which (Boss being an enlightened Liberal, as are all Jews) inflicted upon him certain scurrilous rhymes. He treated that constitutional journal with sublime contempt. He sold his watches and bracelets, and went regularly to his synagogue, and was treated by men of his own class as those are always treated who are known to have a comfortable accumulation of money—howsoever obtained.

Severne was very savage. He knew that Boss was the man, but he could not complete his case. After finding the communication between *The Jolly Cricketers* and the jeweller's cellar, after getting that little bit of additional evidence betrayed by the diamond stud, it was very hard upon Severne to be foiled at last. He sent in his resignation; but the town council had come to their senses, and declined to accept it. Even an English town council occasionally shows some signs of intelligence.

Riverdale and its vicinage were at peace. There were no more burglaries or highway robberies. People slept quietly, and had no fears; farmers rode home from market without any dread of being stopped on the way. Everybody was satisfied—except Severne. He was in a state of permanent irritation. He had been baffled utterly, for the first time in his life; and as the scoun-



drels whom he longed to catch had disappeared altogether from the country-side, he had no chance of avenging himself. It was confoundedly provoking.

One day, the party from Broadoak being in Riverdale, Lady Eva went to Boss's shop for some article of jewelry. Although people began to suspect Boss of being a plusquam-Judaic thief, he did not appear to lose custom; and I think Lady Eva, and most of the other county ladies, knew nothing at all of his recent escapade. Vivian went with his cousin to his shop, and was amused to see the Jew making horrible signs to him, intended doubtless to suggest a private interview. He took no notice at the time of these manifestations; but an hour later, having left Lady Eva at Archdeacon Coningsby's, he strolled round to Boss's. He found the Jew behind the counter.

"Come into my room, Mr. Vivian," he exclaimed, effusively. "I have something choice to show you."

Vivian, smoking a big Partagas, followed him.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Vivian," he said, "but I thought you would be glad to hear about Mark Walsh and the rest of them."

"What the devil do you mean?" asked Vivian.

"The robbers, sir," said the Jew, with tremulous voice. "Those that carried away Miss Ashow, and killed Mr. Severne's horse."

"You are mad, my good fellow," said Vivian, quietly. "I am not in the slightest degree interested in those scoundrels. If you have anything to show me, show it at once."

"This sort of thing won't do," said Boss. "You fine gentlemen think you can do what you like, and nobody dares touch you. I'm

not going to be treated in this way. I'll have money from you, and a good round sum, or I'll give you up to the police."

"You idiotic son of Abraham," said Vivian, "do you see this?" And he pointed at the Jew's curly head a revolver. "I'll blow out the gruel you call your brains if you dare talk nonsense to me. Give *me* up to the police—I like the impudent idea. *You* ought to be in their custody, I think. I'm doubtful whether I ought not to hand you over to Severne on your own confession."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Vivian. I'm very sorry. I was quite wrong—don't think of what I said. You see, sir, I have had so much trouble lately, that I am half mad sometimes."


"Very likely," said Vivian. "But now, understand, once for all, it's no good to be mad with me. If ever you trouble me with

any more of this nonsense, you won't live another week. You know me, and you know that I keep my promises."

And thus delivering himself, Vivian left the shop.

\* \* \* \* \*

Life at Broadoak Avon was for some time very quiet and regular. The Squire went on in his own way, of course—a model country gentleman, who managed his estate to perfection, and was a paragon of magistrates, and solved the great problem of the coexistence of pheasants and foxes. An incarnation of sound sense and high honour was Rupert Redfern—a man who took the straightforward practical constitutional view of all subjects, a man who could not lie and who could not apprehend a new idea. Such men are plentiful in England, and are the givers of its strong slow oxlike greatness. England's genius takes on rare occa-



sions higher forms : Shakespeare and Nelson live in a higher region than Ben Jonson or Samuel Johnson. But your bovine men are of use.

Lady Eva and her French friend seemed greatly to enjoy each other's company. Madame Garnuchot's presence was of great service to Eva, who, for two reasons, had been gradually getting into a morbid and dissatisfied state. She had not that close and intimate sympathy with her husband which a woman of her character requires. A great many husbands and wives get on very comfortably without any such feeling. The Squire, for example, was a perfect husband, from an ordinary point of view—he surrounded Lady Eva with all possible luxuries, and made her wish the law of his household; but of that intense sympathy, that actual unity which is the marriage of the soul, he had not the faintest conception.

Now Eva was just the woman to feel the want of this—to be vaguely conscious of something imperfect in the relation between herself and her husband, and at the same time uncertain whether the fault was his or her own. Thousands of women, wholly commonplace, would have been perfectly happy (in their sense of happiness) if they had occupied Lady Eva's position. But she wanted something more, which Rupert Redfern had not got to give her.

Had she become the mother of children, she would have found a channel for the divine fountain of love and joy which was as yet "a fountain sealed." But this gift also was denied her. It is a situation of peril to a woman when she is thus unable to satisfy the chief longings of her nature. If one could analyse the history of many a sad and shameful breach of the marriage vows, there would usually be found an ab-

solite incapacity for love, on one side or the other. After all the lessons of all the poets, it is amazing how few people have an accurate notion of what love means. *Love is the only great motive power in this world.* Pseudo-philosophers, who desire to deal mathematically with humanity, should ponder this aphorism of mine.

• So, as I have said, Lady Eva was cheered and enlivened by the companionship of Madame de Petigny Garnuchot, who was emphatically *bon camarade*. Madame's liveliness was inexhaustible. Everything appeared to interest her. Her keen dark eyes noticed everything, indoors and out; her comments were always appropriate, often witty. She sat like a happy spectator in the stalls of the great theatre of human affairs. Envable temperament! It is the only theatre to which one has a perpetual free admission, and yet how few of us profit


by the privilege ! There is more real drama in a bee-hive or an ant's nest in an hour than in all the theatres of London right through the season ; and thrush and nightingale and lark are far finer minstrels than Tietjens and Goethe ; and the hawk that flies at the hernshaw, or the pigeon that tumbles in the sapphire air, is more marvellous to look upon than Blondin on his rope or Leotard on his trapèze.

M. Achille Catelan spent the greater portion of his time in Squire Redfern's library—a great collection, with many rare and recondite volumes in it. Bibliomania had infected some of the Squire's ancestors. M. Catelan was wont to spend long mornings in the library, and, after luncheon, to walk for an hour or so in the grounds, and then to return to his reading. But he wrote and received many letters ; and when at breakfast he perused his correspondence, it was



clear from his expressive countenance that it contained matters of intense interest to him.

Vivian, meanwhile, took matters very easily. He was trying hard to get himself into a quiet state of mind. He was afraid of himself. He had brought himself down to a tolerably sober condition; but he was utterly uncertain whether this condition would be permanent. So he stayed on at Broadoak Avon, and watched the progress of affairs, and waited to see whether he was getting sane. Still did he ride at irregular nocturnal hours, but he committed no robberies now. His habits were felicitously irregular. Sometimes he was up with the dawn, riding over the free moorland betwixt Broodoak and Riverdale; sometimes he lay in bed till long past luncheon, reading French novels and poetry, and smoking endless cigars. Little correspondence at this



time had Vivian. Every day there was a Greek notelet from Earine—a little bit of fresh loving talk, that seemed like a frond of maidenhair or a bloom of cyclamen. Every day did Vivian grow more and more in love with this simple and beautiful child of the Ægean. Alas, every day did he feel more keenly his own unfitness for marriage.

Vivian was rather surprised to find that Madame de Petigny Garnuchot was an early riser. He did not expect it of her. He regarded her as belonging to that large class of Frenchwomen who want a cup of chocolate in bed before they can encounter the duties of the day. Suddenly it flashed upon him that Madame came down just in time to meet the postman—a functionary in whom Vivian had slight interest, since he knew that he should always get his notelet from Earine, and also knew that nobody

else knew his address. But he discovered that Madame invariably met the postman, invariably also appeared in the hall just as the letters to be sent out were placed on a slab of white marble. A kind of instinct brought him to the belief that Madame (of whom he had doubts from the first) was simply a clever *mouchard*. He resolved to find her out.

Clearly, if espionage was her duty, Achille Catelan was the person to be watched. The gay wit and caustic irony of his political writings had long ago aroused imperial hatred. He had the art of evoking a despot's detestation with exquisite ease; a master of epigram and allusion, he was more than a match for the master of many legions and much artillery. The world, you see, has its compensations. And M. Catelan, as I have said, was also a conspirator. The enemies of Cæsarism, in all countries, were

his intimate friends. He was in constant correspondence with them all, and knew their plans, and was their confidential counsellor.

Vivian made up his mind that Madame was under orders to act as a spy upon Catelan. He drew the Frenchman into conversation about her, but there was no suspicion in his mind. So he resolved to try an experiment. Mark Walsh was still at hand, not at Riverdale, but in a neighbouring village: Vivian summoned him to his assistance.

So it happened that one afternoon, as Madame de Petigny Garnuchot was walking in the grounds, she was accosted by a labouring man, who said—

“Asking your pardon, miss, can you tell me where to take this letter?”

And he took from his pocket a large red cotton handkerchief, which, being unrolled,

there appeared a brown paper parcel. This again being carefully unwrapped, he produced a letter addressed to M. Achille Catelan.

Madame Garnuchot jumped at this, with a greediness in her eyes.

"I know the person to whom it is addressed," she said. "I will give it him."

"Asking your pardon, miss, I was ordered to give it into the gentleman's own hands."

"He is not at home now," said Madame, lying fearlessly. "I will take care that he has it the moment he returns."

And she gave the messenger half a crown, to silence his objections.

"Now," she said to herself, almost aloud, walking rapidly along a turfen terrace towards a retired part of the gardens, "now I hope I have caught him."

There was an arbour at the end of this terrace. Madame sat down therein, some-

what out of breath. After a moment's pause, she opened the letter, wholly unaware that Vivian was watching her.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE POSTMAN ARRIVES.


"How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!"

VIVIAN saw Madame de Petigny Garnuchot open this letter addressed to Achille Catelan, saw her read it with eager eyes, watched her as she walked rapidly back to the house. It was an absurd bit of composition, of his own doing. It informed Catelan of an immediate outbreak which was to occur at Paris, and invited him to come over in good time to take part in the arrangements, mentioning in a mysterious fashion men whom he was to meet, and where he was to meet them. Some he was

to see in London—some in Paris. The *vraisemblance* of the thing was perfect.

Having intercepted it, the difficulty for her was to pass it on again, seeing that she had interfered with the proper method of delivery. After some deliberation, she concluded that the best plan was to find a rustic messenger, and send it by him.

Those who have lived in the country are well aware that dull rustics are not difficult to find. Madame Garnuchot found one easily enough, and gave him careful direction, not unwatched by Vivian all the while. And of course Vivian, knowing that his letter, if it reached Catelan, would be detected as a hoax, took excellent care to intercept Madame's rustic, and get it from him by some simple device. The dull rustic got a small sum in silver from both parties, and was thoroughly content, and did nothing but drink drugged beer and smoke





bad tobacco for the next two days.

Madame de Petigny Garnuchot, having, with a Frenchwoman's quickness, made mental memoranda of what the intercepted note contained, retired to her own apartment to write. Vivian, who began to find the affair as amusing as hunting an otter or drawing a badger, was resolved to beat her at her own weapons.


As I have said, Madame used generally to be in the hall just as the letters were collected for the postman. Now, the manner of dealing with correspondence at Broadoak Avon was this. People sent their letters down into the hall, where they lay upon a marble side-table. When the postman called, a servant collected them, and handed them over to him. A careless fashion, but characteristic of Squire Redfern, who always trusted the people about him. My own experience is that, now that everybody can

read, letters are perpetually tampered with. The sacrosanctity of a letter is not intelligible to people beneath a certain rank of life; men-servants and maid-servants, fed upon penny periodicals, have a romantic inquisitiveness, and love to find out the affairs of their masters and mistresses. Thackeray was never weary of reminding us that all our private affairs, our nice little family quarrels, our unpaid bills, our small secrets of all kinds, are the talk of the servants' hall, and furnish pleasant excitement for that domestic circle.

"Master's had another tiff with missus," says John Thomas.

"Yes, and I know why," says Abigail. "It's all along of young Mr. William. He's got into a lot of debt again, and master swears he won't pay it, and missus has been crying dreadful."

"You know nothing about it," ex



a pert *fille de chambre*. “I could tell you if I chose. It was all Miss Constance and *that* Captain Stuart that she’s so fond of. She declares she shall die if she mayn’t marry him; and her mamma takes her part, and master says he won’t have him come near the house.”

This is the sort of thing which you might hear if you were in receipt of fernseed, and could walk invisible into your servants’ hall. Servants know everything. You cannot expect them to be uninterested in the drama of life which you are acting for their amusement. And, if you leave letters within their reach, depend on it they will be read.

Just before the postman was due that evening, Vivian walked into the hall, smoking a cigar, with his hands in the pockets of his lounging coat. A lamp stood on the side-table, and beside it was a heap of letters—mostly the Squire’s big square missives,


directed in a hand that you could read a couple of yards off. There were one or two of Lady Eva's delicate fragrant notes, one or two also of Achille Catelan's, written in the quaintest of hands upon the thinnest of paper. Vivian was followed by a couple of sharp fox-terriers, which he had lately been training to pursue rats.

There was a footman in the hall.

"Johnson," said Vivian, "just go to my room and see if I left a letter there for the post."

The servant went, and just at the same instant Madame de Petigny Garnuchot came delicately tripping down the great stone staircase, dressed in black, with white lace at her throat and wrists, carrying in her hand a couple of letters. She hesitated a moment when she saw Vivian and his dogs: then she came forward to the table.

"I am just in time for the post," she said, putting down her letters.



"Yes," answered Vivian. "Forgive my cigar, Madame. I have sent Johnson to look for a letter of mine."

"O, you know I never care about the smoke of cigars. I like it. I like a little cigarette myself sometimes."

As she spoke, she was standing close to the table, and looking eagerly, so Vivian thought, at the addresses of M. Catelan's letters.

"She *is* a *mouchard*, I'll swear," said Vivian to himself.

Suddenly there was a scamper of feet, a barking of dogs. There was a rat in the hall, and the two terriers were after him at once. Hot foot, helter-skelter, dogs and rat were tumbling over each other. Madame screamed, gathered up her petticoats, ran up the staircase with a display of dainty ankles. As the rat was killed, the postman rang, and Johnson, with Vivian's letter in his hand, opened the hall-door.

Vivian gathered up the letters from the table, and handed them to the servant. Some of them, at least. I fear Madame's correspondence found its way to the very coat-pocket which had previously contained the rat that caused the diversion.

Satisfied with his little *ruse*, Vivian went to dress for dinner. He kept Madame Garnuchot's letters, to amuse him when he went to bed.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## BOYS AND GIRLS.

"I wish that I could run away  
 From House and Court and Levée,  
 Where bearded men appear to-day  
 Just Eton boys grown heavy."

IT was from Charles Lamb that Praed borrowed this touch of levity. For my own part, I think it is an insult to the Eton boys. If the House of Commons and the saloons of Royalty were filled with men at all like Etonians "grown heavy," it would be a measureless reform. A man who has been gay and joyous and brilliant in his boyhood can by no process subside into the average dunderhead of the day. It is a fact though that Beales, M.A., was an

Eton boy, and played female characters in Eton theatricals; and, when *that* development is possible, there is no saying what may happen. Praed himself might have lived to balk the ambition of a Smith, and to edit the *Quarterly*.

There is no Eton for girls, and ladies' colleges are an abomination; and if a girl is left without education, she probably "cometh up as a flower," and delighteth the hearts of publishers. But it cannot be denied that in the present day young women are a very sad sequitur to little girls. One nuisance is that little girls become young women so confoundedly early: a small person of thirteen or so stands on her dignity, and disdains to romp, and thinks herself quite "grown up." If, however, you can find a girl who is girlish—a real child, without any silly notion about being a young lady—she is a very delightful creature: but



this state of things is as evanescent as a sunset, and the next time you see her she will probably have become the primmest little prig in the world, with definite theories of her own concerning society and fashion and theology.

All this is due in a measure to cheap literature. The penny papers have revolutionised the world. They educate us all, whether we like it or not. They teach the veriest infant that their father and mother are fallible creatures, by no means to be revered. Indeed the whole duty of man in these times may be described as reverence to himself, and irreverence to everybody else. "Know thyself" is an absurd old maxim: the thing can't be done: why try? Believe in thyself, O man, and on no account believe in anybody else.

Vivian took Madame Garnuchot's letters to his room in the evening, and read them

at his leisure. One was addressed to an official person at Paris whose name was well known to him as connected with imperial espionage ; the other was to a crony of the writer's at Rouen, and was full of *argot* only readable by a person singularly well acquainted with French society of the Bohemian order. The former of these letters merely repeated, so far as she could understand it, the subject of that epistolary hoax which Madame had intercepted ; but the other was a vivid picture of Madame's life at Broadoak Avon, with keen unflattering portraits of the persons whom she saw, Vivian himself being a prominent figure. It was a piquant piece of gossip, such as none but a very clever Frenchwoman could write ; with a vein of vulgarity running through it which Madame never betrayed in conversation.

Its contents surprised Vivian. He read

it through twice with considerable interest : then, instead of going to bed as he had intended, he dressed in a riding costume, went down to the stables, saddled his bay mare, and rode off in the moonlight.

His absence was not noticed till the afternoon of the next day, since he very frequently did not appear till dinner-time. He had left a note for Eva, to say that he might be away for a day or two. Madame de Petigny Garnuchot seemed to take curious interest in his disappearance.

“ Monsieur votre cousin is rather eccentric, apparently,” she said to Lady Eva.

“ He does pretty much as he likes,” was the reply. “ It is the way with Englishmen who have no particular duties or dependents.”

“ He is very charming and very clever,” said Madame. “ What a pity he does not range himself, and marry. He is rich, of course.”

“He is pretty well off, but he is not what we call a marrying man. He likes independence too much.”

“Ah, but if all clever and handsome men were like that, what would the ladies do? I think gentlemen like Monsieur Vivian ought to be obliged to marry.”

Lady Eva, not entirely agreeing in this view of the matter, replied with a remark on the beauty of the afternoon, and so the subject dropped.

Vivian, as I heretofore said, started for his ride through the moonlight. He travelled for some hours, and soon after day-break reached the *Peacock* inn. They were early folk at that hostelry, all but the landlord. Old Polly could never sleep beyond five o'clock : and when she was up and stirring, the servant-maids had to be on the move, and the whole huge inn was awake long before ordinary hours.

Hence did it happen that our wayfarer found ostlers ready to take charge of his mare. Having seen her safe he entered the inn—found his old friend—and was shown to the chamber in which he previously had slept.

“Let me sleep four hours,” he said, “and then I’ll breakfast.”

I regret to say that he did not get a fair four hours’ sleep. Was he dreaming or awake? He could not tell; but that terrible old hag in the picture, with wild gray locks and marvellous maddened eyes, stood over him with a dagger in her hand, and he felt its keen point on his breast. He struggled—she was stronger than he dreamt a woman could be—he caught her by the throat at length, and she gave one wild scream, and fell back upon the floor with a frightful crash.

Vivian was awake now, at any rate.

Broad daylight poured through the windows. He still felt the dagger of his dream ; and, looking down at his breast, he saw a slight stain of blood on his shirt. This was accounted for by a wound, scarcely more than skin deep, in his breast. He looked round for the weapon. It lay on the floor by his bedside—a very unromantic article—a common clasp-knife.

“Well,” he reflected, “if I was a respectable old female ghost, and wanted to assassinate a fellow I didn’t know, I’d certainly use a more elegant weapon.”

What was he to conclude about this curious incident? He came to a rapid and distinct conclusion. It was simply this : that his brain had not yet regained its balance, and that he had been doing a little somnambulism. As to the clasp-knife, it might easily have been left in the room by some rustic employed on the premises.

Thus having decided, Vivian tried to find in his bath the refreshment which he had not obtained from sleep. Ah, but there is nothing like sleep. I am *φίλυπνος, φίλυμνος*. Who loves song, loves sleep. And sleep I love because it seems to me like a fragment of the unknown future. It brings me a cup of the water of eternity. I drink Lethe. All the fret and fever of the world—all the biting arrows of mine enemies and the interminable dreariness of my friends—what are they to me . . . who sleep? “It wraps a man round like a cloak,” quoth Sancho Panza. Ay, a cloak invulnerable to all poisonous javelins which our fates and foes and friends jaculate at us. Give me, as Sir Philip Sydney wished,

“A chamber deaf to noise, and blind to light,”

and I will utterly forget the troubles of the garish day, and sink into dreamless slumber, as I hope in time to sink into that

sweeter sounder sleep which we call death.  
Then write upon my headstone—

“After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well.”

Ay, but the morning! Open the window! Comes through the casement the fresh breath of dawn—and therewith the song of joyous birds, the delicious fragrance of flowers, the unutterable delight of the young day. This is the new world; this is Morning Land; this is a region untrodden hitherto by mortal foot. Every day the world is created anew. The man who does not know this is a mere dolt.

Yes, every day there is a new world. And if this be so, as it certainly is, every day of our experience—if the sleep that comes to us with every revolution of the planet whereon we dwell brings a new heaven and a new earth on our own awakening—how will it be with that greater longer sleep which terminates (so



far as we know) our dwelling on this planet ? What will the new morning be after that deep dreamless sleep ? What manner of birds will sing, and flowers breathe odour, and light fall upon the scene in the new world thus entered ? They will transcend all our earthly experience. If it be delicious to welcome the summer morning after our ordinary sleep, how infinitely delicious will it be to encounter the unknown unguessable morning whereto we shall awaken from the sleep which men call death ! I often wonder that men are not eager to sink into that sleep, that they may wake to the light of a loftier dawn.

Vivian came down to breakfast ; had a chat with Pinnell ; learnt that Eastlake was at home, and started for Birklands. He arrived at that pleasant mansion early in the summer afternoon. There was a misty light mingled with the sunshine, and the

great elms in the Park hid their leafy summits in the veil of vapour. As he rode towards the house, he perceived that something was going on : round by the stables a line of carriages was drawn up, their shafts turning skywards ; and on the lawn he saw many gay groups of children, with comparatively few grown-up folk among them.

“Jack’s got a child’s party,” thought Vivian. “Dear old boy ! He’s an elderly child himself.”

Leaving his mare in good hands, he walked forward to the lawn. It was a joyous scene. Multitudinous young folk of both sexes were taking pleasure in various ways : in one place was cricket, and in another croquet ; there was a velocipede race along a gravel walk ; there were little people flying into the air in swings ; there was a man busily engaged in filling balloons, which rose one after the other into the

quiet ether ; a Punch and Judy show was amusing a changeful crowd ; boats were moving on the pond which Jack called his lake ; a series of donkeys were doing their utmost to upset their riders ; and the music of a German band was torturing the air. Vivian looked on delightedly, and reflected on the odious necessity that boys and girls should grow into men and women. Not being in any haste to find his friends, he established himself on a rustic seat, and lighted a cigar, and enjoyed the spectacle. The soft south wind, laden with a myriad odours from the summer gardens, passed gaily by him, and tossed about the tresses and draperies of the merry maidens on the lawn.

Suddenly the games were suspended, the cricketers threw down their bats, and the croqueters their mallets ; Punch and Judy beheld their audience rapidly disappearing

in the distance, and made remarks each to the other on the neglect of the classic drama? the donkeys lost their riders, and went off to browse on Jack Eastlake's flower beds? and there was a rapid skedaddle of small legs all in one direction. Looking that way, Vivian beheld a tent—and the meaning of the movement flashed upon him.

“Eating and drinking,” he soliloquised. “Those are real solid sterling pleasures, compatible with innocence. Once I loved jam tarts and ginger-beer; now I care very little indeed for red deer venison and Clos Vougeot. Deer's flesh is easy to digest, and good Burgundy goes straight to the blood, and so I like them. But I think a world in which eating and drinking were not necessary would be an agreeable improvement on this present planet.”

Having delivered himself of this sublime reflexion, Vivian strolled in a leisurely

fashion towards the tent, and looked quietly through one of its entries.

At the head of a long table was Jack Eastlake, "as jolly as a sandboy," slashing away mercilessly at a cold baron of beef. Clara and Earine sat on each side of him, and to Vivian it appeared that the beautiful child of Greece looked a trifle melancholy amid the mirth. Footmen were busy in attending to the wants of the young people—of ages varying from six to sixteen—who filled the table. Cold duck, fowl, lamb, the pies of Perigord, cool cucumbers, huge salads of lobster, crowded the board; ample confectionery was there, and ices beyond counting; ay, and a limited supply for the seniors of pale ale and claret-cup.

"The old buffer is confoundedly stingy with his beer," remarked Sir Charles Heyford, a baronet of fourteen, whose father died in his babyhood, and whose mother,

being a lady of fashion, had left him to study beer and tobacco, horses and dogs, in the stables of Héyford Manor. The boy had not neglected the curriculum, and could drink, smoke, ride, shoot, and swear against any groom or gamekeeper in the country. Yet there was the making of a fine fellow in him.

Vivian, having had a long ride, was rather peckish ; so he glided into a seat at the very bottom of the table, and contrived to get some cold meat and beer. His next neighbour, a little girl nine or ten years of age, began to chatter to him as soon as he sat down. She was a child with a marvellous thick mass of that red hair which delights painters, and which other human beings abhor. A weird child, rather. She began by asking Vivian who he was, and where he came from : he promptly replied that he was the Old Man of the Sea, and had come

to stretch his legs after his long ride on Sindbad the Sailor's shoulders.

"But the Old Man of the Sea ought to have grey hair," was the response.

"No : it's only old men of the land that do that. There's a great difference, you know. Maidens who live on land have legs, but mermaidens have tails."

"Yes, I saw a mermaid once. It was in Wales, on the sea, by moonlight. We were in a boat, and saw her quite clearly, sitting on a rock, and heard her sing, so strangely. As we got near her, she glided into the water."

"Ah," said Vivian, encouraging the superstitious little girl to talk as she pleased, "you should hear the sirens sing. They beat all your mermaids."

"I've read about them," she replied gravely. "I thought if you heard them you could never get away, and they put

you to death in some dreadful manner. Have you heard them?"

"O yes," said Vivian, "several times."

"Then how did you get away?"

"I don't care so much about music as some people."

From this topic the conversation between Vivian and his young friend strayed to others of kindred nature. She seemed to have no mental food except of this romantic sort. She was credulous of all preternatural fictions. She believed in ghosts and fairies, in gnomes and doppelgangers, in Undine and Peter Schlemihl. Vivian found her an amusing companion at luncheon, but could not help wondering where and how she got her education.

Even where children are the guests, a cold collation cannot last for ever; exhaustion of appetite arrived at length, and the young folk streamed out of the tent towards



various parts of the lawn, as eager to resume their sports as if digestion were a thing unnecessary. But Vivian's new acquaintance kept close to him ; she had found a listener to her tales of wonder, and was determined not to lose him. So she chattered away unweariedly, while they sauntered together in the shadiest part of the lawns and gardens. Vivian was in no hurry to talk to Jack Eastlake ; preferred indeed to let that hospitable creature enjoy the humours of the day with no interruption. And the young ladies, he thought, had plenty to do in entertaining the children. So he strolled about, and listened to his little friend's prattle.

As they wandered through a kind of shrubbery which bounded the lawn, they became aware of a tall gentleman, gray-haired though in the prime of life, who sat on a stile which led towards some pleasant

park land. His back was turned towards them. The red-haired little girl exclaimed :

“ There’s papa !”

Then running forward to him, she cried out : “ O papa, papa, here is such a nice gentleman. He knows all about mermaids and fairies, and says he’s the Old Man of the Sea.”

With this queer introduction, Vivian found himself face to face with Captain Lester. After a laugh at the oddity of the affair, they easily entered into conversation.

“ My little Psyche,” said Captain Lester, “ reads nothing but romantic nonsense, and believes all that she reads. I have been abroad since her mother died, which was eight years ago, and Psyche has lived with a maiden sister of mine, who has taught her nothing but fairy-tales.”

“ Eastlake seems to be holding quite a children’s festival,” remarked Vivian.


“Yes, it is just the thing in which he most delights. I like to look at it myself, but not too near.”

“You are staying here, I suppose.”

“I came for a day or two, but Eastlake is so hospitable that it is hard work for me to get away. Luckily I am an idle man just now, and these are pleasant quarters. But I can't settle down for long—I am too restless.”

“You have travelled a good deal?”

“Travelled and fought. Served in India in my youth, but sold out and came home when my governor died. Then I married : my wife lived only two years after Psyche was born. I could not stay at home, so left the child with my sister, and started to see a little adventure. Saw a good deal, as it turned out, with Garibaldi. When there was no fighting to be done, I took to wandering, and have been pretty nearly every-



where. After a few years of such a life, it is impossible to settle down quietly."

"Difficult perhaps," replied Vivian; "but hardly impossible. You had much better marry again."

"I *have* thought of that," said Captain Lester; "but the more I consider it, the less I like it. You see, I am getting too old. I have seen exactly the sort of woman I should wish to marry, but I haven't the face to offer her such a battered gray-haired wanderer. No, it won't do."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## EARINE'S LOVER.

"SIR RUPERT. What did the fellow call me?

What? An old fogy?

ANDREW.

Yes, Sir Rupert.

SIR RUPERT.

Ha!

He shall feel the thrust of an old fogy's rapier."

*Old Play.*

EASTLAKE, I need not say, was delighted to welcome Vivian. And how great was Earine's delight! The child, as Vivian had fancied, looked somewhat melancholy as she sat in the tent; but her beautiful countenance lighted up with perfect joy when she recognised her old protector—her master, as she loved to call him and to think of him.

It was late in the summer evening when Eastlake's young guests dispersed, and the party staying at Birklands finished the day with a mirthful meal, which was neither dinner nor supper, but a mixture of both. Hence Vivian had no opportunity of talking to Earine until the next morning.

"You are not looking well, Earine," were his first words.

"How can I be well when I am away from you? Why may we not be together? I should be well then, and you would soon be happier than you are now."

"Don't preach to me, that's a good girl. You must be patient."

"I try to be patient," she said, "but it is very hard. Your good friend Mr. Eastlake is always telling me I ought to marry, and recommending different people whom he knows. And then there is Captain Lester. I know by the way he looks and talks that


he will be asking me, one of these days—and it is such a trouble to me.”

“O, is that what keeps Lester here?” said Vivian, laughing. “Well, he seems a very nice fellow. Don’t you like him?”

“I should like him very well if he would let me alone,” said Earine indignantly.

“But you know, my dear little girl,” said Vivian seriously, “why I dread the thought of marriage. You know I cannot trust myself. You know that since that terrible day when I was suddenly struck down I have not been my own master—I have been incapable of governing myself. It would be a folly, Earine—it would be a crime—for me to run the risk of marriage.”

“You say you are not your own master. Perhaps not, but you are mine. If you would only let me do my duty to you! I don’t ask you to marry me, but let me live with you and serve you. When your trou-



ble comes upon you, then I could help you. I am sure that I could cure you : but I have told you so a thousand times, and what is the use?"

"My dear child, I wish I could believe you. You believe in your own power, I know. But if I were to let you have your way—and if then the madness should seize upon me, and I should do some desperate thing—what a miserable affair it would be. No, Earine, I must try myself somewhat longer. I had a dream on my way here which proves that I have not recovered my health of mind as yet."

And then he told her of his suicidal nightmare at the *Peacock*.

"Ah, if I had been with you!" exclaimed the Greek girl—without a blush at the notion, for, you see, young ladies, she was an innocent ignorant child of nature. "You would not have had such a cruel dream."




“Well, Earine, you may be right. But I have not yet made up my mind to the possibility. I am going to test myself . . . . then we shall see.”

“How will you test yourself?”

“I am hardly certain. I have three or four plans. It is absolutely necessary that I should find myself in a saner state before thinking of marriage. And it is doubtful whether I ought ever to think of marriage.”

“Well,” said Earine with a long sigh, “you are the master, and I am the slave. Tell me that you hate me, and desire never to see me again, and I will go away into some lonely place and die.”

“But I don’t hate you, Earine, and you know it perfectly well. I don’t ask you to be reasonable—it is too much to ask of any woman—but be kind. Remember how much I have suffered—how much I am suffering now. Think of what I should feel if




we were married, and had children, and my old madness came upon me."

"O I am very cruel and thoughtless," she exclaimed, "I know I am. But then I love you so very much. I am always unhappy when I am away from you. I believe—I *do truly* believe—my love would cure you. But I won't say any more. Do as you think right—only tell me what you mean to do."

"I will tell you in good time, Earine—when I have decided for myself. Forgive me if I seem hard to you: your love, my child, is the happiest gift I have ever received: without it I should be as wretched as a fiend. Don't let us talk any more of this now. I have something else to say to you."

I am terribly afraid lest the exquisitely decorous young ladies who in these days wear the most charming dresses, without of

course the remotest idea of fascinating mankind, should think my little Earine a forward designing minx. She is not, really. Please to remember that she is quite uncivilized ; that she was born in the Sporades, and brought up on goat's milk cheese and Greek wine and the *Odyssey* ; that before she reached England she knew nothing of *chignons*, *fichus*, *paniers*, *tabliers*, but wore a scanty crocus chitonion, and tied her marvellous hair in a careless knot at the back of her shapely head. Since Undine got a soul given her, never was creature more innocent than Earine. Vivian was her master ; he had given her a soul ; he had developed her sensuous life into a spiritual life. Such things are done but rarely. This Greek girl realized again the myth of Pygmalion : a divine statue when Vivian first beheld her, she would have become coarse and gross and sensual like her fellows, but for his influ-



ence. He taught her to think. He taught her to fear. He taught her to blush. He taught her to love.

I think therefore that for Miss Earine Delisle it would be unfair to erect too high a standard of etiquette. Greece and England differ. I have seen two sturdy fellows staggering under the weight of a single bunch of grapes, hung on a pole, and carry it from shoulder to shoulder. That was on a Greek island. When grapes in such clusters are brought to Covent Garden from Surrey, then perchance maidens like Earine will be found in the home counties.

"I have something else to say to you," Vivian observed. "You remember that tyrannical Rouen Prioress."

"I should think I did," said Earine, laughing. "She took good care to make me remember her. Her stripes seem to smart even now."

“Did you see much of her handwriting? Can you recollect it?”

“She was very fond of writing orders and warnings and reprimands. And she wrote a rather curious hand; upright, more like a man’s than a woman’s. I should know it directly.”

“Is this at all like it?” said Vivian, showing her a letter of Madame de Petigny Garnuchot’s.

“It is hers,” she said, excitedly. “I’m sure of it. What have you found out about her?”

“I think,” said Vivian, quietly, “that I have recently had the pleasure of making her acquaintance. She is staying in the same house with me. My cousin Eva thinks her a charming person.”

“But how has she managed it?” asked Earine, eagerly. “Surely she ought to be in prison.”

"They manage those things better in France. She is much too clever a woman to be allowed to remain in prison. No, child, I suspect she is a Government official, and a staunch servant of the Emperor."

"What *do* you mean?" asked Earine.

"Why, my child, when your tyrant got into the clutches of the police, the police found that they could make much better use of her than keeping her locked up, with hard work to do, and bread and water to eat. So they have sent her to England as a spy: for England is the refuge of men who cannot live in their own country, and France has too many such men. One of them is living at Broadoak—and this woman is there as a spy upon him, as these letters prove. How the deuce she managed to get into such quarters is a mystery to me. However, there she is: and there she may stay for a while, until I get a good opportunity of ex-

posing her. By the way, I must send on these letters of hers, else she'll suspect something."


"Upon my word it is wonderful," said Earine. "She was a very clever woman, but this is more subtle than I could have imagined. I should like to see her again."

"Would you like to revenge yourself on her?"

"No. She was brutally cruel, but it was her nature. To have such a nature is punishment enough. No, I have no wish for revenge, but I am curious to see her in her new character."

"You shall see her. I wonder how she would look sitting opposite you at a dinner table."

"She would be astonished, I think," said Earine. "Do you mean to deal with her soon? If you leave her alone too long, she may perhaps do some serious mischief."



"I don't see how she can," replied Vivian. "The gentleman whom she is employed to watch is beyond the reach of imperial persecution—as safe at Broadoak as if he were in an impenetrable fortress."

"Yes," said Earine; "but if she gets at his correspondence, and if his letters implicate people who are *not* beyond imperial reach."

"Egad, I never thought of that. It might have awkward results. I must give Catelan warning."

"Will you write to him?"

"It would not be safe. No, I must go back to Broadoak and talk to him. I have said nothing to him yet. But I don't want to expose this woman until I have discovered how she came to be invited there. Then I'll take you to Broadoak, and we'll see if she recognises you."

"Then you will be going away again the



moment after you arrive," said Earine, reproachfully.

"O, another day won't matter. And afterwards you will have to go to Broadoak with me, child. Don't be pathetic."

Just at this point of their colloquy Clara Eastlake and little Psyche found out where Earine was, and carried her off on some of those mysterious enterprises wherewith English ladies occupy their mornings. Vivian, strolling farther away into the grounds of Birklands, met Captain Lester, smoking and sauntering. They joined company, but were for some time comparatively silent. At last Lester said:

"Miss Delisle is a charming young lady."

"Very," said Vivian, drily.

"Sort of a ward of yours, isn't she? At least, so I heard."

"If you feel any particular interest in her, Lester, I'll tell you all I know of her his-

tory, but in the strictest confidence. There are very few men whom I would tell; but the moment your little girl introduced me to you, I saw you were a fellow of the right sort. So, if you are curious, and feel you have a right to be curious, I will relate the little girl's history."

"I don't know about having a right to be curious," said Lester. "You know you were advising me to marry again, and I told you I had seen the very woman I should like to marry. Well, I meant Miss Delisle. She is a perfect creature, in my opinion. I dare say she thinks me an old foggy, though I have twice the strength and vigour of the youngsters of this generation. I dare say she wouldn't look at me, if I ventured to ask her. But I thought I would say a word or two to you on the matter, whatever happened."

There was a pause, and the two men

walked along a mossy path under a line of lime trees, smoking meditatively. At length, said Vivian,

“If you married a woman, you would like her to love you—to become yours because she loved you better than any other creature.”

“Yes,” said Lester.


“Do you see any sign of that in Miss Delisle?”

“I fear not.”

“You never will. That child will marry you if I tell her to marry you; whether you would be happy together under that condition, judge for yourself.”

“She would marry me if you ordered her to do so!” said Lester, in a surprised tone.

“Yes. She would kill herself if I told her to do so. She considers herself my slave. I tell you all this in confidence. And, if you wish it, I will tell you her story.”



Again was there a pause, and many puffs of smoke ascended to baffle the bees that were busy among the lime-blossoms.

"No," said Captain Lester, "I won't hear her story, unless she chooses to tell it me herself. You have no objection to my asking her the important question?"

"Not the slightest. If she became your wife she would be a very fortunate woman."

"Well," said Lester, half to himself and half to his companion, "I think I shall try the perilous experiment. I shall fail, of course: divine beauty like hers is not to be wasted on old fogies. One might as well give Chambertin to a chimney-sweep."

"If anybody else called you an old fogy, I suspect there'd be a row," said Vivian, laughing. "And you evidently have more faith in your chances than you admit, or you would not make the trial."

“Well,” replied Captain Lester, “I quite agree with Montrose—

He either fears his fate too much,  
Or his deserts are small,  
Who dares not put it to the touch,  
To gain or lose it all.

So I mean to try, and take the consequences.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Having thus resolved, Captain Lester did not delay. It was a pleasant summer evening, refreshing after a sultry day. Already the lamps were burning in Eastlake's drawing-room, but lawn and terrace were more attractive, so the ladies were loitering outside.

Vivian and his friend lingered over the claret, but the Captain watched his opportunity and joined Earine in the evenglome.

Of course he began by talking about the weather. What a blessing, to the uninventive English, is the ever-varying weather of this island! Captain Lester, having left an

excellent bottle of Lafitte for the purpose of asking a young lady to marry him, of course began with the utmost innocence to laud the loveliness of the evening.

“What a beautiful moonlight night!”

“Very delightful,” she answered.

“I have travelled a great deal by moonlight,” went on the gallant Captain, “in all parts of the world and in all sorts of scenery, but there is nothing so beautiful as moonlight among English woods.”

“I used to like it on the sea,” said Earine, “among the Greek islands.”

“You have travelled in Greece?”

“I am a Greek.”

“The devil’s in the moon for mischief,” and when Captain Lester got on that topic, there seemed every chance of his rapidly approaching a tenderer one. Earine’s simple statement, however, retarded his advance. He had no notion that she was a Greek; he

fancied her a simple English maiden ; this bit of unexpected information caused him to meditate.

“No one would think so,” he said, after a pause of a few moments. “There is nothing foreign in your manner and speech, Miss Delisle.”

“I am very glad to hear you say so. I always fear that I am betraying myself when I speak, or when I do anything. You have travelled, Captain Lester, and you know that Greek girls live in quite a different way from the young ladies of England. Why, I can remember, in the hot afternoons, I and my cousins, and a bevy of other girls, used to make up swimming parties, and spend hours in the water, and often swim so far out that we could hardly see the shore.”

“And were none of you ever drowned ? And did nobody steal your clothes ?”

“Drowned ? O dear no ! Babies learn

to swim before they can walk—swimming is much easier than walking. And as to clothes," she said, with a slight blush, "we never wore enough to tempt a thief."

"A *naïve* young lady," thought Captain Lester, and liked her none the worse for it.

"Would you like to return to Greece?" he asked.

"I am happy in England," she answered.

"I gave my daughter a Greek name," said Lester, "because I love the country."

"She is a delightful little girl," she said, "and has been telling me wonderful English stories that I never heard before. So I have been telling her the adventures of Odysseus, and she believes them all, and likes them very much. Ah, she would enjoy a life in the Greek islands."

Here was an opportunity. Captain Lester was too keen a campaigner not to seize it.



"I would take her there," he said, "if I could persuade some one else to come with us. Will you come, Miss Delisle?"

"Me!" she said, in amazement, turning upon him her great sapphire eyes, which shone like gems in the misty moonlight.

"Yes, Miss Delisle. Will you be my wife? I have admired and loved you from the first moment of our meeting. I am much older than you, but I have as much vigour as most men half my age. I think I could make you happy."

He spoke too volubly to be interrupted, had Earine made the attempt. But she did not try to interrupt him, and was in no haste to reply to him. The thought came to her that perhaps Vivian had encouraged him . . . a thought which filled those sapphire eyes with lustre of tears, and changed the serenity of her countenance to profound melancholy.

"It is impossible," she said at length.

The sad tone of the girl's voice was sufficient to prove to Captain Lester that indeed it was impossible. He might as well have retired at once, and he felt that he might. Yet it seemed to him cowardly—and even discourteous—to be repelled by the very first refusal.

"Am I too old, Miss Delisle?" he persisted. "Do you fear that Psyche would be troublesome? I have plenty of money; we could live where you please; we could go away to your favourite Greek islands, and live without the troubles of civilization. For your happiness I would do anything."

"You are very kind. You are too good for me. But please say no more. It is indeed impossible."

Convinced of the futility of further persistence, Captain Lester said,

"I will not trouble you any more, Miss

Delisle. I see it is useless. Let us be friends, as before."

"I am so grateful to you, Captain Lester," said Earine, frankly, placing her hand in his. "We shall always be friends, I hope."

"Always," he said, emphatically, holding for a moment her tremulous hand, and thinking what a slender flower-like thing it was.

And the Captain meant it; for he was a chivalrous gentleman, and could never think otherwise than with reverence and attachment of the woman he had vainly loved.

Lo, there is a sound of young voices and gay laughter under the lindens, and a flutter of white skirts, and red-tressed Psyche comes dancing along the turf, exclaiming—

"O papa! O Earine! Coffee has been waiting such a time. Mr. Eastlake says you must have run away together."

\* \* \* \* \*

Thus began Vivian's sojourn at Eastlake's. He intended to return to Broadoak in a few days. I fancy he staid a few months.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## MURDER.

"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

ONE morning, as they sat at breakfast, with all the windows wide open, and the soft breeze of July breathing over the velvet lawns, and bearing into the pleasant rooms the divine fragrance of a myriad roses, the letters and papers were as usual delivered.

It was a delightful day. Everybody had come downstairs in the most joyous of humours; the two young ladies, in their light print dresses, looked as fresh as flowers. Vivian, in the gayest mood, was telling little Psyche his dreams, as fantastic as Arabian

Night fragments ; Captain Lester seemed to have recovered from his disappointment, and was full of cheery talk ; and as to Jack Eastlake, he was as jolly as all the jolliest of Mr. Charles Dickens's characters rolled into one. How is it that when people are in this temper there almost invariably comes something to upset them ?

Jack Eastlake, lounging over his coffee and grilled fowl, indolently opened his *Times*.

"No news, of course," he remarked. "Duke of Plantagenet come to grief on the turf at last. Sheriff's officers in his house with claims for half a million. Biggs, clerk in a bank at two pounds a week, has been living at the rate of twenty thousand a year, and inviting his Directors to meet Peers at dinner ; now he's absconded, and everybody's very much astonished. The Prime Minister is going to bring in a bill to disestablish himself. Nothing very fresh, you see."

"I always think," said Vivian, "that it is a great mistake to look at newspapers when you are in the country. It's the time to forget politics and literature, and to enjoy life. It's so pleasant to think that a revolution or an invasion or an earthquake may be happening while one lies on one's back upon the turf, and smokes a cigar, and watches the floating clouds. As for me, when I wander about I don't even let people know where I am going."

"Everybody is not so independent as you, Mr. Vivian," said Lester.

"By Jove, Vivian," exclaimed Eastlake abruptly, "here's something that concerns you. Look at this."

And he walked to the window with the *Times* in his hand, and pointed out a paragraph to Vivian, who had followed him. So pale had Eastlake turned that both his daughter and Earine perceived that there was something serious.

The paragraph which Vivian read with dilating eyes and quickened pulse, narrated the death by poison of Rupert Redfern, Esquire, of Broadoak Avon, and the inquest held upon his body, and the detention in custody of his wife, Lady Eva Redfern, on suspicion of having committed the murder. Mr. Redfern, according to the narrative, had quite recently been attacked by some mysterious ailment, which required medical treatment. The physicians were baffled, until the arrival of Dr. Fownes, famous for his studies in toxicology, who immediately pronounced it a case of slow poisoning. His opinion amazed the country doctors, who warmly controverted it; he, knowing he was right, took resolute measures, and did the best he could to administer the right antidote. But he was too late. The poison—one of the latest inventions of chymistry—had taken too firm a hold of its victim; and



Rupert Redfern, one of the strongest men in Europe, was subtly destroyed in the very prime of his life. That he had been slowly poisoned, was incontestably proved at the inquest ; it was also shown that his wife, Lady Eva, always personally administered his food and medicine, and allowed no one else to interfere with them. Hence it happened that she was now virtually a prisoner, under the Coroner's warrant, at Broadoak Manor.

These facts Vivian learnt from the *Times*. Other facts there were, which he learnt later, and from other sources ; among them, that the tenants and labourers on the Broadoak Manor estates were perfectly maddened by the Squire's death—but that they resolutely refused to believe Lady Eva his murderess.

"I must go to Broadoak at once," said Vivian, in a strange, low whisper to his friend. "But come out on the terrace a



moment. Look here ; Eva never did this thing ; I believe I know who did it. I will go off by rail at once. I'll ride to the station if you'll let one of your grooms come to take the mare back. Now will you come over to Broadoak, and bring Earine, some time to-day ? It is most important—I can't stop to explain why."

"Rely on me, my dear fellow," said Eastlake. "I'll ride with you to the station, and then come back, and have some lunch, and bring Earine by the very next train."

"Good," said Vivian. "You're a true friend. I must go to poor Eva's help. The child will be distracted. Ask Earine to come out to me."



Earine came.

"My child," he said, "I am going to Broadoak at once. Eastlake will tell you why. He will follow by the next train, and bring you. Good-bye."

In ten minutes more he was in the saddle, and his mare, Ianthe, was giving Eastlake's cob, a fine vigorous weight-carrier, a thorough breathing. The five miles to the station took less than a quarter of an hour. Luckily there was a train in a few minutes. Vivian sprang into a smoking-carriage, just saying to Eastlake,

"Thanks, old fellow. Come on as soon as possible."

It was a ride of an hour and a half. As he sat alone in the carriage, he reflected on the strange state of affairs. That Eva had murdered her husband was simply ridiculous. They loved each other—not with the intensest love, which Eva had not learnt, and which the Squire could never teach her—but better than ninety-nine out of a hundred of the people who marry. No: Vivian felt sure that the murder was committed by Madame de Petigny Garnuchot. But why?



How could it profit this woman, this French spy? This baffled him.

"I must find out," he thought, "how Eva came to know her; then perhaps I shall get a clue."

Then the wilful demon that possessed him suggested that his beautiful cousin was now a widow—ay, and a wealthy widow, for the estates were unentailed, and there could be no doubt that the Squire had left everything to his wife.

"The child confessed that she loved me," mused Vivian, "that day when I played priest at Avoncliff. By the way," he suddenly thought, "can the priests have anything to do with this vile business? Confound them, I believe they are up to all manner of mischief. Had the Garnuchot any connexion with that plausible *sacerdos*, I wonder? Spies and Jesuits are nearly related. I hope poor Eva will be collected

enough to tell me how she met with that hideous woman."

As he thus meditated the train stopped, and he heard the porter exclaim—

"Springfield ! Springfield !"

This was the station for Broadoak Avon. A two-mile drive in a rickety fly, and he should see his unhappy cousin.

Even that slow drive came to an end at last. Vivian found Broadoak in charge of the police, and Lady Eva confined to her own apartment under their care. None of her relations had yet reached her.

At first he had some difficulty in forcing his way through the guard of bucolic constables ; but we know his resolute temper.

He succeeded, of course, and found Eva alone, sitting in a chair by the window, looking with tearless eyes towards the winding Avon.

"Eva !"

She recognized his voice, and sprang from her seat into his arms, and wept profusely. He wisely let her weep.

"O Vivian," she said at last, "I knew *you* would come. My good dear Rupert is dead. And they say I have killed him."

"They are liars, my darling," he replied. "Be calm. We will find out who did this cruel deed. I am come to help you, and will not fail. Trust me, Eva, will you not?"

"Yes, Valentine, I trust you."

"I did not think Rupert had an enemy. He was too good."

"He was indeed," she sobbed, "I did not know how good he was till now. I did not love him half well enough."

"Don't take such fancies into your head, my child. Now, I want you to tell me one thing. How came that Frenchwoman, Madame Garnuchot, into the house?"

“She was recommended to me,” said Eva, hesitatingly, “by a Catholic priest I know, Father Isidore.”

“Of Avoncliff?”

“Yes.”

“That will do, my dear Eva. I must start at once to find that priest. But I can see you have taken no food lately : promise me to eat, and to drink some wine. I’ll send it you at once. It is most important that I should go, but I cannot go until you promise.”

Eva promised : and Vivian, finding her maid, insisted on her immediately taking some refreshment to her mistress. Then he went to the library. There was Catelan, reading and writing as calmly as if there had been no murder committed since Cain killed Abel.

He rose to receive Vivian.

“M. Catelan,” said the latter, in a low

voice, "is Madame de Petigny Garnuchot here still?"

"O yes."

"Listen. I *know* she is a *mouchard*—a spy upon *you*. I *believe* she poisoned Mr. Redfern. I must be away for some hours : will you take care that she does not leave the house till I return?"

"I will," said Catelan, earnestly.

"Thanks," replied Vivian, grasping the Frenchman's hand.

Without further colloquy he went to the stables, ordered out a horse that he knew could go, and rode straight toward Avoncliff.

"Ah," said the groom that had brought out the horse, to one of his fellow-servants, "it's all right now. Them lying scoundrels as said Lady Eva done it will find their mistake now Mr. Vivian's come."

"You're right, Jim," was the reply.

"Damn them interfering police."



Vivian, when he reached Avoncliff, left his horse at the *Talbot*, and walked to Father Isidore's residence. The priest was at home. He seemed perfectly amazed to see before him the man who had played such an abominable trick upon him. But Vivian, unabashed, at once addressed him,

"I am not come," he said, "to apologise for having taken your place in the confessional—I want to speak of something more important."

"More important than sacrilege!" ejaculated Father Isidore, his dark eyes kindling with a lurid light of anger.

"I think so," said Vivian, quietly. "At any rate, listen to what I have to tell you, and we can discuss the sacrilege afterwards."

"Be it so."

"You know Lady Eva Redfern, of Broad-oak Manor. She is now in the custody of

the police, charged with poisoning her husband."

"Can it be true?" asked the priest in a tone of horror. "Is Mr. Redfern dead?"

"He is dead. And, as Lady Eva would no doubt succeed to the bulk of his property—and as she is a Catholic—you can best judge whether his murder was intended to benefit your Church."

"What do you mean?" said the priest. "Do you dare to insinuate that I prompted this atrocious crime?"

"It is curious," replied Vivian, "that there is a person residing at Broadoak whom I know to be a woman of bad character—a Madame de Petigny Garnuchot—and that she was introduced by you."

"What do you know of her?" asked Father Isidore.

"More perhaps than you do. Did the persons who recommended her as a fit com-

panion for Lady Eva confide to you her history?"

"I have every reason to believe her a devout and pious woman," said Father Isidore.

"Have you!" rejoined Vivian, with a sardonic laugh. "I have reason to believe otherwise. I know her to be a convicted criminal and a police spy. And I believe her to have murdered Rupert Redfern. I hope she did not do it by the command of the Church."

Vivian could see that the priest was alarmed and perplexed.

He remained for some time in reflective silence. Then he said,

"Madame Garnuchot was recommended to me by a person whom I must not name, as a lady of good birth and true piety, who wished an introduction to English society, and who might exert a useful influence over

recent converts. When I saw her, she appeared to realize this description. I introduced her to Lady Eva Redfern, who liked her very much, and invited her to stay at Broadoak. That is all I know of her, on my honour as a gentleman. Can you prove what you tell me about her?"

"Every word of it. And this person you must not name is a dignitary of your Church, I suppose?"

"He is my ecclesiastical superior."

"He is something more, you see. He is intimately connected with the French police; and he has made you a tool, representing a woman of the vilest character as a lady of birth and piety."

"I cannot believe it," said the priest. "And you suspect her of having committed the murder? What good could it do to her or anybody else?"

"That," said Vivian, "is more than I can

understand. But here are the facts. This woman is in the house on false pretences. She is a convicted criminal in the pay of the police—surely a person more likely to commit murder than my innocent cousin Eva. Eva has confessed to you—and I am sure she has never any deadly sin to confess.”

“What do you wish me to do?” asked the priest.

“Well,” said Vivian, “if it is allowed in your Church, I should write a sharp interrogatory letter to this ecclesiastical superior of yours. And I want you to come to Broadoak at once. It is your duty to do all you can for Lady Eva.”

The priest agreed to write this letter, and to start at once for Broadoak. Vivian was soon on the road back. When he reached the house, he found there had been arrivals, and among them the Marquis of Alvescott, who was with his daughter. Moreover, some

county magistrates had arrived, and were holding counsel as to what must be done. Vivian also found that Madame Garnuchot had attempted to get away, but that Catelan had prevented her—saying that no one could be allowed to leave the house who was in it at the time of the murder. The lady had been very much enraged, but Catelan was resolute.

Soon after Vivian's return arrived Father Isidore on foot, and Eastlake and Earine in a fly from the railway-station. Vivian took them all three to his own rooms, out of the way of Madame Garnuchot, who was sulking in her own. And having left them in safety, he joined Lord Alvescott.

"This is a damned queer business," said that outspoken peer. I regret to say that the Marquis, having in his time used a great deal of strong language to jockeys and trainers, could not avoid introducing it in

his ordinary conversations. "What the devil do these idiots mean by suspecting Eva? The insolent scoundrels! I should like to horsewhip that blockhead of a coroner."

"If we take things quietly," said Vivian, "we shall soon settle the affair. I think I know the murderer."

"Damned shame to murder old Redfern," said the Marquis. "He was the best fellow I ever knew. He lent me twenty thousand at a day's notice that time I lost such a pot of money on Touch-and-go for the Derby. Who did it, do you think?"

"I believe it was a Frenchwoman that is stopping in the house, though why she should do it I can't understand. However, I see that some of poor Redfern's neighbours, who are magistrates, are here; and, if you have no objection, we'll go and talk to them. They're in the library."

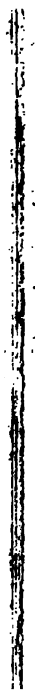
The Marquis assented.

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In the library they found four gentlemen, pleasant country neighbours of the Squire's, and justices of the peace. One of these, Sir Harry Burrell, Vivian knew very well, as he was a frequent guest at Broadoak. So he introduced the Marquis—who, as one of the Turf's most splendid patrons, was of course received with all due honour. As at Eton the Captain of the Boats is greater than the Headmaster, so in a wider arena the princely owner of race-horses is more admired and revered than the Prime Minister. Who would not rather be a Glasgow than a Gladstone?

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.







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